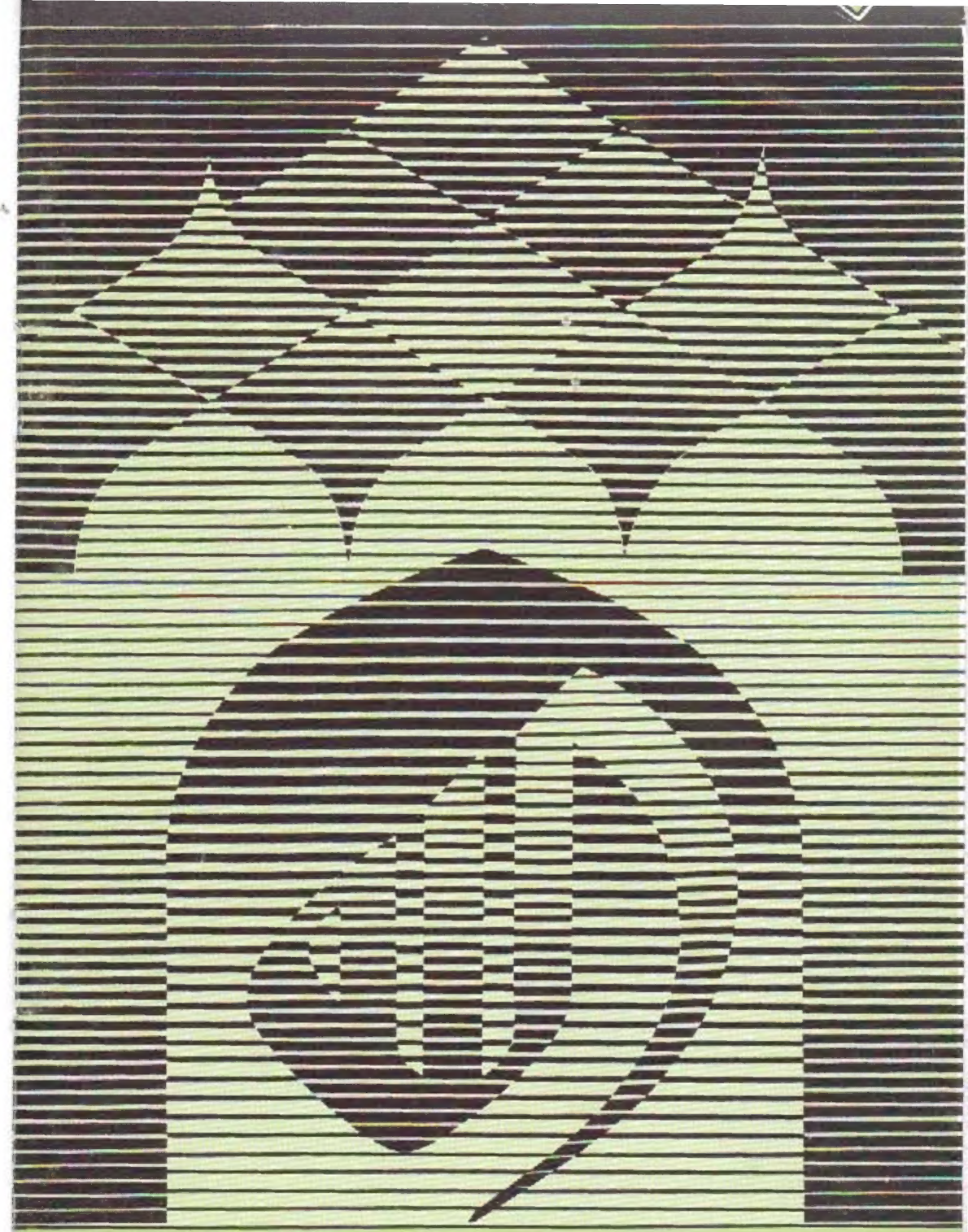

EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM

UNIT: 23

AN OUTLINE OF EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM *(UMAYYADS)*

Da'wah Academy
International Islamic University
Post Box No.1485, Islamabad (Pakistan)
Phone No.853195, 858640-3, 850751
Fax No.92-51-853360

ISLAMIC CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

(English)

Compiled by:	**Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University, Islamabad.**
Name of the publication:	An Outline of Early History of Islam *(Umayyads)*
Title design:	Sy. Mubeenur Rehman
Printers:	IRI Press, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
Edition:	1996
Quantity:	

For correspondence:
Head, Islamic Correspondence Courses (English)
Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University
Post Box No.1485, Islamabad (Pakistan)
Phone No.853195, 858640-3, 850751
Fax No.92-51-853360

FOREWORD

Muslim communities all over the world are faced with a variety of challenges in their Dawah activities. One major challenge relates with the area of education. It is not easy to develop, in every community, an educational institution which may provide professional assistance and back up to members of community in acquiring Islamic knowledge and information. In some Muslim communities full time educational institutions have been established. In others, educational needs of the community are met through weekend programmes, seminars, symposia and other such activities.

Some Muslim communities have given serious thought to programmes of distance teaching, however, such programmes have not been materialized with proper know-how and professional assistance.

The Dawah Academy, at a humble level, is in the process of developing a series of correspondence courses in English and other languages. In order to develop a suitable introductory course on Islam as the way of life, we are introducing, at this point, material selected from existing Islamic literature.

Our next step will be to produce our own material in view of the needs of Muslim communities in various parts of the world. This will have two levels: first general level and second a post-graduate course on Islam. The present selection from Islamic literature deals with first level. This covers a variety of topics dealing with Islam as a complete way of life. We hope this course will provide initial information on important aspects of Islam.

We will greatly appreciate critical comments and observations of participants on this course. This will help us in development of our own material for both levels of study. Please do not hesitate to write to us if you have some suggestions to improve the material or methodology. Address all your observations at the following:

Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad,
Director General,
Dawah Academy,
International Islamic University,
P. O. Box No.1485,
Islamabad.
Phone No.853195, 858640-3, 850751
Fax No.92-51-853360

AN OUTLINE OF EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM (UMAYYADS)

1. Establishment of the Umayyad Rule:

(A) Transfer of Power to Mu'áwiya:

Transfer of power to Mu'áwiya ended a democratic form of government. The caliphate now became a kind of hereditary monarchy, acquired by the sword, diplomacy or intrigue, not by election and majority support. When Mu'áwiya had allegiance sworn to his son Yazid, a hereditary succession began which based the caliphate on political rather than religious considerations. Influenced by conditions in Syria (which had long been a vassal state of the Byzantine empire in pre-Arab days), Mu'áwiya intended to model the caliphate on the hereditary monarchies of Persia and the Byzantine Empire This becomes clear in his words : "I am the first of the kings"[1]

During the reign of Mu'áwiya, the Muslim empire extended in the East as far as Lahore in Pakistan. The primary attention of this Caliph was turned to Byzantine territories in the north and west. The Umayyad fleet reached 1700 warships, enabling Mu'áwiya to conquer many islands, among which were Rhodes and other Greek islands. He also prepared armies for both winter and summer invasions of the Byzantine Empire. These invasions were called al-Shawàti (i.e. winter invasions) and al-Sawà'if (i.e. summer invasions). In the year 48/688, Nua planned a sea and land invasion of Constantinople under the leadership of Yazîd. However, the Muslims were compelled to retreat after they had lost many men and battleships. Two years later Ifrîqiyya (Tunisia) was conquered,

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[1]Ya'qûbi, Tàrikh, vol. II; p. 276.

and many of the Berbers embraced Islam. The city of Qayrawân was built and made the capital.[1]

Mu'áwiya had his son Yazìd declared crown-prince, despite his promise in the treaty of peace concluded with Hasan ibn 'Ali to leave the succession open to Muslim choice. The declaration was enacted despite the opposition of the people and led to further discussion and civil war.

(B) Changes in Government :

Mu'áwiya was a powerful ruler and a good administrator. He was a crafty, diplomat — and has been well compared to Richelieu — whose profound knowledge of human nature enabled him to gain over men of moderate opinions in all parties opposed to him.[2] He instituted many changes in government administration, and he founded the king's lancers. Provision was made during his reign for a special section in the mosque where during prayers he might be protected from a fate like that of 'Alìs.[3]

Mu'áwiya introduced the official seal for dispatch of memoranda from the caliph. A true copy of each memorandum was made, then pierced by a thread and sealed with wax; it was finally impressed with the seal of office. Mu'áwiya was also the first to use the mails for quick notification of events. Trained horses were kept ready at stations When

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[1]Ya'qùbì, Kitab al-Buldàn (ed. by De Geoje), pp. 347 —— 3. Kindi, Kitab al-Wulàh, p. 36.

[2]Nicholson, List. Hist. of the Arabs, p. 195.

[3]Fakhri, p. 101.

the rider arrived, he changed his tired horse and rode to the next station. The process was repeated until he reached his destination.[1]

(C) Grave Events in Yazìd's Reign :

In the year 60/680 Mu'áwiya died at the age of sixty. He left the leadership of the Muslims to his son. Yazìd was the son of Maysùn, a Bedouin woman whom Mu'áwiya had married before he became caliph. She did not enjoy life in Damascus, and palace luxury did not attract her Bedouin spirit.[2] So Mu'áwiya sent her and her son back to her own place and there Yazìd grew up with the characterise Bedouin love for amusement, hunting, generosity, song and poetry (in this last he inherited his mother's poetic talent). His skill in composing poetry led people to say that poetry began with one ruler ended with another, referring to Imri'ul Qays and Yazìd.[3]

Yazìd rules lasted three and a half years. During this period, three grave incidents took place. In the first year, Husayn, the younger son of 'Ali, was murdered; in the second year Madinah was plundered; and in the third year the Ka'ba was raided.

When Yazìd ascended the throne some of the nobility of Madinah refused to swear allegiance to him. He wrote to the governor of this city asking him to urge these people to take the oath. 'Abd Allàh ibn 'Abbas and 'Umar consented, but 'Abd Allàh ibn az-Zubayr refused, fled to Makkah, sought shelter in the Prophet's tomb, and announced his own claim on the caliphate. He found a strong rival in Husayn, whom he could not venture to oppose and so he abandoned the matter for a while. When

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[1]Philologically the post (barid) is 12 miles. Probably the maximum they could manage between two post stage was this distances.

[2]Fakhrì, pp. 101-102.

[3]Ibid. p. 165.

the governor asked Husayn to swear allegiance to Yazìd, he pretended that he would take the oath in public, went to Makkah where he received messages from the people of Kufà inviting him to their city with a promise of support. Husayn sent his cousin, Muslim ibn 'Aqil (ibn Abì Tàlib), to investigate conditions of Kufa. However, shortly after his arrival, Muslim was murdered by the governor, ('Ubayd Allàh) ibn Ziyàd.

In spite of the warning of Ibn Abbàs who had not confidence in the people of Kùfa, Husayn decided to leave Makkah.[1] He did not heed the warning of the eminent poet, al-Farazdaq, who told him that although the hearts of the people of Kùfa were with him, their swords would be with the Umayyads.[2] Some maintain that in spite of Husayn's awareness of the danger, he acted under the pressure of his kinsmen in their resolve to avenge the murder of Muslim. On Muharram 10th, 61 A.H. Husayn encamped in Kùfa, in the Tigris Valley with approximately two hundred of his followers. Surrounded by Ibn Ziyàd's army, Husayn fought them with his scanty numbers who all perished. He sons, daughters and scanty were taken captive, and his head was sent to Ibn Ziyàd who, in turn, sent it with the women and children to the Caliph Yazìd in Damascus (now the capital of the Umayyad empire). He ordered that the women and children be returned to Madinah.

The murder of Husayn aroused enthusiasm in the party of 'Alì which had until then lacked enthusiasm and devotion. Shì'ite hostility towards the Umayyads was easily roused, and "the reminder of the blood-stained field of Kerbalâ, where the grandson of the Apostle of God fell, tortured by thirst, had been sufficient to evoke, even in the most luke-warm and heedless, the deepest emotion, the most frantic grief, and an

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[1]Tabari, vol. VI, p. 216.

[2]Mas'ùdì, Murùj, vol. II, p. 65.

exaltation of the spirit before which pain, danger and death shrink to unconsidered trifles."[1]

The second incident which made Yazìd's rule repugnant to many Muslim was the plunder of Madinah, the Prophet's city. The attack was due to the hostile attitude which the Medenites had for the Caliph. Their allegiance to him was broken, the Caliph's governor expelled, and members of the Umayyad house disturbed.[2] Yazìd dispatched General Muslim (ibn 'Uqba), an Arab tyrant who besieged the city, conquered it and plundered it for three days. He and his soldiers carried these violent actions to such an extent that he was called the spendthrift (musrif).[3]

The third offence was the raid on Makkah in 64 A.H. Ibn al-Zubair proclaimed himself caliph in this city after the murder of Husayn. His cause gained support in Iraq and Egypt. Yazìd ordered Muslim, the conqueror of Madinah, to proceed to Makkah, but he died en route, and was succeeded by Husayn (ibn Numayr). Husayn besieged Makkah from al-Harra, a place outside the city; the two armies engaged in battle which extensively damaged the Ka'ba. A Syrian versifier, describing this battle, said that the timbers of the Mosque, i.e. the Prophet's pulpit and other relics were hit by the Umayyad artillery like a foaming stallion.[4] During the battle, news of Yazìd's death reached the Muslims. It is said that al Husayn promised to take the oath for Ibn al-Zubayr and asked him to move to Syria. The latter did not accept this proposal because he wanted the Hijaz to regain its former prestige and again become the seat of the Caliphate. The Umayyad general returned to Damascus after the great

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[1]Browne, Lit. Hist. of Persia, vol. I, p. 226.

[2]Ya'qùbi, History, vol. II, p. 304 et. seq.

[3]Maz'ùdi, Murùj, vol. II, p. 92.

[4]Fahrl, pp. 108-9.

damage to the Ka'ba.[1] Many Muslims felt that the siege of these two sacred cities, Makkah and Madinah, was necessitated by the hostility of the Hijaz and that the Umayyad general had no intention of violating their sanctity.

(D) Mu'áwiya II and Marwàn I

Yazìd was succeeded by his young weak son, Mu'áwiya II who remained in office fewer than forty days. He had to confine himself to his palace and even thought of recommending a person more suitable for this supreme post, as Abù Bakr had done with 'Umar. Finding no one, he also thought of recommending six candidates as 'Umar had done. finally, he left the choice to the Muslims, saying. "You are the best judges of your own affairs to choose for it whomsoever you like; but I will not take it as a provision with me in death, nor have I enjoyed it in life." He confined himself to his palace and was not seen until he died.[2]

The Arabs of Syria, who had hitherto been united and powerful, were now divided on the question of the Caliphate: the southern Yemenite Arab tribe of Kalb favoured a Caliph from the Umayyad house, while the northern Arab Mudarite tribe of Qays was inclined towards Ibn al-Zubair. Even the Kalb tribe did not approve of a member from the Umayyad house. Some recommended Khàlid (ibn Yazìd ibn Mu'áwiya), who was learned and eloquent; some held that he was too young and were inclined towards Marwàn ibn al-Hakam on account of his age and position. The latter was disliked by some Muslims because the Prophet had exiled his father Hakam from Madinah. Marwàn was, therefore, called "the exiled son," and al-Hakam and his descendants, the Umayyads, were cursed by some Muslims.[3]

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[1]Ibn al-Athìr, vol. IV, p. 55.

[2]Abù al-Mahàsin, al-Najùm al-Zàhira. vol. I, p. 164.

[3]Ibn Sa'd, Kitab al-Tabaqàt, vol. V, p.26.

Dissension continued among the partisans of the Umayyads until they held a conference in Jàbiya in Syria, where the oath of allegiance was taken to Marwàn (Dnu 1-Qa'ba 64 A.H.); the caliphate was transferred from the Sufyanì branch to the Marwànì branch of the Umayyad house. At that conference it was also decided that Khàlid ibn Yazid and 'Amr ibn Sa'ìd ibn al-As should subsequently succeed Marwân. By so doing, they would satisfy the aspirations of the Umayyads to the caliphate, and the Yemenite Arab Tribe would become united.

In the meantime, the northern Arab tribe of Qays met in Marj Ràhit under the leadership of Dahhàk ibn Qays of the Fihr tribe and swore allegiance to Ibn al-Zubair. Marwàn marched to Marj Ràhit where he defeated al-Dahhàk (Muharram, 65 A.H.), enabling the southern Yemenite Arab element to gain predominance over the northern Mudarite one.[1]

The battle of Marj Ràhit rekindled the tribal Arab feuds, not only in Syria but also in the Arab provinces, and particularly in Khuràsàn: these feuds extended even to distant Arab countries.[2]

After the battle of Marj Ràhit, the Arab empire was ruled by two caliphs; Marwàn in Syria and Egypt and Ibn al-Zubayr in Hijaz and Basra. marwàn conquered Egypt and appointed his son 'Abd al-Aziz governor of this country.[3] He then returned to Syria where he prepared two armies: the first was ordered to Hijàz where it gained victory over Ibn al-Zubayr; the second was dispatched to Iraq, but achieved little until Marwàn died in 65 A.H. On his death the caliphate was left to his sons, 'Abd al-Malik and Abdal-Aziz, to whom the oath had been given. This

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[1]Tabar, vol. VII pp. 34-9.

[2]Kindi Kitàb, al-Wulàh, pp. 40-48.

[3]Maqrìzì, Kitat, vol. II, pp. 337-338.

conflicted with the decision made at the Jàbiya conference that 'Amr ibn Sa'ìd should succeed.

Marwàn's caliphate lasted little more than nine months. It is said that he had married the mother of Khàlid, the wife of Yazìd ibn Mu'áwiya, and that Marwàn used to insult him before his countries so that his claim to the caliphate might be weakened. One day Marwàn accused Khàlid of stupidity; the young man complained to his mother who resolved to handle the matter herself. One night, while Marwàn was asleep, she placed a pillow on his face and did not lift it until he was dead.

2. The Golden Age of the Umayyads :

(a) 'Abd al-Malik Second Founder of the Umayyad Dynasty:

After Marwàn's murder, the Umayyad caliphate was affected by tribal feuds to the brink of disintegration; this might have happened, had it not been for the great 'Abd al-Malik (65—86/685 — 705), rightly considered the second founder of the Umayyad dynasty because he prevented chaos and destruction through perseverance and endurance in times of hardship.

Mukhtàr and 'Abd Allàh ibn al-Zubair were the most formidable enemies of Abd al-Malik. As the Arab historian Mas'ùdi states, in 66A.H., 'Abd al-Malik marched to fight Mukhtàr in Kùfa. On his way he received news of the death of his general and the defeat of his army in Iraq. On the same night he learned of the death of the general sent to fight 'Abd Allàh ibn al-Zubair at Madinah. Furthermore, he received information that the army of Ibn al-Zubair had entered Palestine and that his brother Mus'ab had followed him. News that the Byzantine emperor had encamped near Tarsus en route to Syria shortly followed; the slaves and the mob of Damascus had attacked the inhabitants of the city, and the prisoners had escaped from the prisons; the Arabs had attacked Hims, Ballbak and other cities. His courage and self-confidence enabled him to

overcome these disasters. His morale was never higher than it was on that night.

As a result of Mukhtàr's victory the Shì'ites were loyally attached to him. His powers, consequently, became more formidable. 'Abd Allàh ibn al-Zubair did his best to stop him, he dispatched a huge army under his brother, Mus'ab (whom he also appointed governor of Iraq). In 67 A.H., a battle was fought near Kùfa in which Mukhtàr was killed with 7,000 of his followers and Kùfa was conquered.

'Abd al-Malik proved to be a noble statesman and a capable administrator. He let Mus'ab ibn al-Zubair fight the Shì'ites and the Khârijites so that the forces of both parties might be weakened. In 71 A.H., 'Abd al-Malik marched along the Euphrates, but had to return in order to suppress the rebellion of 'Amr ibn Sa'îd in Damascus.[1] He then marched to Kùfa where he defeated Mus'ab whose army had been depleted by fighting the Khawàrij. 'Abd Allàh ibn al-Zubair aroused the hostility of the Shì'ites by killing Mukhtàr. The Umayyad Caliph was now able to attract some of Mus'ab's generals to his side; and left with only a small band of supporters, Mus'ab was killed. The Caliph entered Kùfa where the oath of allegiance was sworn to him (71/690). 'Abd al-Malik appointed governors of Kùfa and Basra, and returned to Damascus.[2]

The defeat of Mukhtàr and Mus'ab established the authority of 'Abd al-Malik in Tarq. He now turned his attention to 'Abd Allàh ibn al-Zubair in the Hijaz, because possession of the two sacred cities was essential to consolidate his rule. 'Abd al-Malik formed a large army under the leadership of Hajjàj, who had been for some time a schoolmaster in

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[1]Ya'qùbì, History, vol. II, p. 304.
Mas'ùdi, Murùj, vol. II, pp. 116-117.

[2]Tabarì, vol. VII, pp. 187-8.

the mountainous city of Tà'if. Hajjàj Marched to Tà'îf, then to Madinah, whose governor joined him with his army, and at last Hajjàj proceeded to Makkah and besieged it.The sacred Ka'ba was again shot by artillery. Ibn al-Zubair's family and friends deserted him, but he persisted in fighting until he was killed in 73/692. His defeat was due partly to his avarice, partly to his confinement to the Hijàz, not comparable to wealthy provinces such as Egypt, which would have provided him with wealth. Furthermore, his forces had been divided by fighting Mukhtàr, the Khawàrij, and the Umayyads.

After defeating Ibn al-Zubair, Hajjàj was appointed governor of Hijàz for two years. He next became governor of Iraq, and at the head of a large Syrian army, he marched to this province. When he approached Kùfa, he ordered his army to stay behind; and accompanied by twelve horsemen, he advanced to the city, entered its congregational mosque, and ascended the pulpit. He wore a mask on his face. When the mosque was filled with people, he revealed himself and gave a memorial speech in which he praised himself, mocked the people of Iraq, and threatened them for having broken their oath of allegiance to the Umayyads[1] A speech for the same purpose was given in the Mosque of Basra.

Conditions in the East became worse, as Ibn al-Ash'ath broke the bond of allegiance to the Umayyad Caliph and was supported by the inhabitants of Karmàn, Rayy and the Daylam. He soon entered Basra and Kùfa, and Hajjàj appealed to the Umayyad Caliph for support. At Dayr al-Jamàjum more than eighty battles were fought until this rebel was defeated. He attempted fight to India, but he ws killed and his head brought to Hajjàj, who order that the prisoners of war be put to death and that his supporters be generously rewarded. Hajjàj subjugated Iraq and the other eastern provinces, where peace and security were now established. He then appointed al-Muhallab ibn Abì Sufra as deputy governor of

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[1]Mas'ùdì, Murùj, vol. II, p. 125.

Khuràsàn and facilitated the conquest of many places such as Khujanda, Kush (80/699), Khuttal, and Rabinjàn, where he met various armies coming from Bukhàra.[1] Yazìd, who succeeded his father Muhallab as governor of Khuràsàn, invaded Kuwàrizm on the Caspian Sea, while his brother, al-Mufaddal, conquered Baghlìs, which had violated the treaty of peace. Qutaba was appointed governor of Khuràsàn, and he arrived at its capital, Merv (Marw), at the end of 87/705.[2]

'Abd al-Malik was a highly gifted caliph. He was, as Mas'ùdì states[3], one of the Umayyad statesmen and administrators comparable to Ma'àwiya 1, 'Abd al-Malik and Hishàm. 'Abd al-Malik aimed at establishing a common administrative system in his provinces.

Before his caliphate, 'Abd al-Malik had been one of the canon lawyers of Madinah. He had been called "the dove of the mosque" because of his incessant recital of the Qur'an. He was also an excellent poet and traditionalist. "I have conversed with no one." says Sha'bì, "to who I have not found myself superior except 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwàn. But I have never recounted a tradition to him without his improving my knowledge of it, nor a verse without his capping it.[4] I once said to Abd al-Malik: "You hair has become grey early. He replied: My grey hair is (due) to ascending the pulpit, and my fear of speech.[5]

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[1]Balàdhurì, Futùh al-Buldàn, pp. 423—4, Gibb, The Arab Conquests in Central Asia, p. 25.

[2]Gibb, pp. 27-28.

[3]Murùj, vol. p. 184.

[4]Ibn Sa'd, Kitàb at-Tabaqàt, vol. I, p. 116.
Sujùti, Tarikh al-Khulafà, p. 84.

[5]Fakhrî, p.113.

(B) The Administrative Machinery Under 'Abd al-Malik.

The administrative machinery under the Umayyads was primitive in character. There was no such elaboration or separation of duties to promote efficiency as had been the case under the 'Abbasids. The machinery of government was conducted by four principal departments (dîwàns), or, more precisely, by four ministries:

1. The Ministry of Land-tax (dîwân al-Kharaj); this was entrusted to an official (Sâhib al-Kharâj) whose duty it was to control the Department of Finance.

2. The Ministry of the Signet (dîwân al-Kâtam), where the ordinances of government were drawn up, confirmed and sealed. It was the first Umayyad Caliph, Mu'àwiya, who introduced the official seal for the dispatch of memoranda from the caliph. A true copy of each memorandum was made, then pierced by a thread and sealed with wax; it was finally pressed with the seal of the office.

3. The Ministry of Correspondence (dîwân al-Rasâ'il); this was entrusted with the control of provincial affairs and all communications from the governors.

4. The Ministry of Miscellaneous Revenue (dîwân al-Mustaghallât).

Apart from these four monasteries there were other monasteries of less importance.

The records in the registries and the tax offices were for the first time changed from Persian in Persia and Greek in Syria to Arabic in 85/704. In Egypt, Arabic was introduced a year later by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik, who had been appointed governor by his brother the Umayyad Caliph Walid. Arabic and Greek were henceforth used in

government offices, the former as the language of the Arab ruler, the latter as the language in which work in these offices was to be conducted. As a result, Persians and Christians were removed from state offices and replaced by Arabs. Many of the posts connected with the revenue were later restored to the Persians and Christians, because there were not yet enough trained Arab officials.

To the Ministry of Correspondence were attached a number of scribes, poets and other men of letters. A large number of such men were officials in the Secretariat. The director of this office was to receive all correspondence and submit it to the caliph for consideration and approval, and to act as his chancellor. The scribes were generally chosen from among persons known for their wide literary knowledge and outstanding skill in the art of composition. Hence the chief of this ministry was called Sâhib Dìwân al-Inshà', i.e. the person in charge of the Ministry of Composition.

(C) Protocol : Tiraz [1]

When the Arab empire expanded and its wealth increased, the Arabs adopted the Greek and Persia protocols (truz, sing, tirâz) the official stamps printed on the clothes of kings, princes and other men of higher rank. The Arabs, however, did not adopt the images, for Islam prohibited them. They used instead their names and other formulae. The Umayyad Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik, started with the papyri which had hitherto been made in Egypt with Christian formulae inscribed on them.

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[1]Tirâz meaning embroidery, is of Persia origin. It was later applied to the embroidered robe, especially that embroidered with the characteristic parallel lines of the Sussanian kings.

This word was later used for the house in which this kind of cloth was made or for any other embroidery of parallel lines, stones, glass, mosaic or pottery. It finally applied to the official stamps set at the beginning of papyrus rolls.

Maqrizi, Khitat, vol. II, pp. 79, 212, 407. Grohman, Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library, vol. I, p. 4. encyclopedia of Islam, art, Tiraz, s.v.

The Caliph ordered the Christian formulae on these rolls to be translated into Arabic. When he understood their meaning he realised that they did not conform with Islamic tenets. Therefore, he ordered his brother, 'Abd al'Azîz, governor of Egypt, to abolish these formulae and replace them by this Muslim religious formula: "There is not other god save Allàh" 'Abd al-Malik ordered the governors of his other provinces to abolish the Greek papyri.

The Arab protocols were conveyed to Constantinople, but the Byzantine emperor denied their inscriptions and was so enraged that he sent the Umayyad Caliph a command to abandon this idea. The Caliph did not respond and returned the emperor's present. A second attempt was made, but with no result. A third message was sent to the Caliph threatening to stamp as the inscription on the Byzantine coins a curse on the Prophet Muhammad.

'Abd al-Malik was urged to establish houses for making clothes. Each house was controlled by the "Sâhib al-Tiraâz" whose duty it was to supervise the goldsmith and tailors, inspect their work and pay their wages.[1] The clothing manufactures of the tirâz reached the zenith of their importance under the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids. The 'Abbasids established similar centre for making official clothes in the most important cities of Persia.

(D) Coins : Sikka :

The payment of taxes was ordained by the second Caliph, 'Umar, who urged a legal and uniform system of coinage. Sheep were reckoned as equivalent to small coins; large sums were paid in camels. At the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Roman gold pieces (dinârs) and Persian silver pieces (dirhams) had circulated in Makkah.

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[1]See my Tàrikh al-Islam, vol. I (7th. ed.) Cairo, 1964, p. 448.

Byzantine gold currency (dînâr) was used in Egypt and Syria, while the dirham, a unit of silver coinage, was circulated in Persia, Mesopotamia and Babylon. With the rapid progress of Arab civilization a simple system of exchange for business transactions, the introduction of Arab coinage, and the withdrawal of foreign coins from circulation became necessary. Minting coins had been the exclusive right of the ruler, and the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik determined to exercise this right. Together these reasons persuaded this Caliph to reform the currency in 77/964. The state had hitherto exercised no control over the minting of coins in the Arab provinces because each respective governor had minted special coins bearing his own name and not that of the caliph.

Silver was abundant in the eastern provinces where mines existed in Persia, Farghâna, Bâdhghîs, etc. It seems that these mines supplied such large quantities of silver that the Sassânians were able establish their monetary system on a silver basis alone.[1] During their rule of about four centuries, the Sassânians had maintained the same monetary unit, namely the dirham.If[2]

After the Arab conquest of Persia these silver mines became available to the Arabs, and silver coins or dirhams were widely circulated in the eastern Arab provinces. Another source of silver was the spoils of war, which was used in paying the Arab garrisons stationed in such provinces as Basra and Kùfa as well as the prices of merchandise purchased at these places. The circulation of these silver dirhams also

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[1]Christensen, Iran sous les Sassanides, pp. 53-54.

[2]Allan and Treven, Coinage of the Sassân (survey of Persian Art), vol. I, pp. 816-830.

included the payment of Madinah or Damascus of annual tribute or legal taxes.[1]

The dînâr, the Latin "denarius" (aureus), was the name of the unit of gold currency in early Islam. The currency reforms of 'Abd al-Malik left the standard of gold coin unaltered.[2] It was thenceforth issued by all the mints of the Arab empire. The respective weights of the dinâr and the dirham, 65 and 43 grains, served as the standard of all subsequent issues up to comparatively recent times. The 'Abbâsid dinâr retained the fineness of 97 for many centuries, and the same proportion of gold was observed in the issues of the Fâtimid Caliphs, the Almohads, and sometimes of the Almoravids.

The value of gold was not stable; it varied from time to time.[3] The dînâr weighed 4.25 grains of barley. Egyptian dînârs were weighed in Bithqâls. Seven Mithqâls weighted 10 dirhams, one mithqâl was equal to 24 Karats, and one karat was equal to 7 grains of barley.[4]

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[1]See the detailed account of Professor Salih A. El-Ali in his Al-Tanzimat al Ijtima'iyya wa'l-Iqtisadiyya in Basra, pp. 209-215. (For God currency, op. cit. pp. 215-217). R.P. Blake, The Circulation of Silver in the Moslem East down to the Mongol Epoch H.J.A.S., Harvard, II, 1937. pp. 291-328. Bernard Lewis, The Fatimids and the Route to India, Extrait de la Revenue de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques de l'Université d'Istanbul, IIe année No. 1-4.

[2]Encyclopedia of Islam art, Dinàr, s.v.

[3]Mqrîzî, Khitat, vol. II, p. 294.

[4]Qalqashandî, Subh al-A'shà, vol. III, p. 440.

According to Lane-Poole, [1]the dînâr was a gold coin about the weight of half of a guinea. According to Marqîzî[2] one dinar equaled 16 dirhams; therefore, was dirham was worth three pence and half penny.[3]

The name dirham was borrowed by the Arabs from the Persians.[4] Multiples and subdivisions of the dirham were rare in early Islam, the most usual division being the dâniq, equal to one exith of dirham. The relative weight of gold to silver coin was 10 : 7 and the actual weight of the dirham was 2.97 grains. 'Abd al-Malik's reform currency was based upon a mixture of Roman and Sassânian nominals from the roman system of coinage, preserving, at the same time, the legal dirham introduced by the second Caliph 'Umar. The Roman Solidi formed the model of the current gold coins, while the legal dirhams formed the model of silver ones. The value of silver coins at first was in relation to the gold as 10 : 1; still later on 12 : 1; still later 20 : 1; owing the devaluation of the silver coin.[5]

Copper coins unlike other coins, differed from the dirhams in one respect. They were weighed on the scale. For instance, 18 pounds were equal to 500 dirhams. The number of pounds for the same amount of copper coins might decrease as a result of the scarcity of copper if they were taken away by merchants to other countries. This, of course, greatly affected the circulation of copper coins.[6]

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[1]The Story of Cairo, p. 59.

[2]Khitat, vol. II, p; 294.

[3]See also Muqadasì (ed. De Geoje) p. 240.

[4]Encyclopedia of Islam, art. Dirham, s.v.

[5]Von Kremer, Orient Under the Caliphs, pp. 198-200.

[6]Qalqashandi, vol. III, p. 444.

Gold and silver were melted, then cast into bars. The ends of the bars were cut in the presence of the official in charge in order to make certain that they were pure gold or silver. When the bars were weighed, they were cut into ingots out of which gold or silver coins were struck. The pure gold or silver coins were called "nugra", i.e. good or net coins. The false silver coins were called "Sawdà'", i.e. black, the value of which dropped in proportion to the amount of copper blended with the silver. The value of good copper coins varied in proportion to the value of the dirhams. Each 6 dâniqs or 48 fils were, as a rule, equal to one good dirham.[1] A good dirham was usually equal to 3 "black dirhams".

Muslim coinage usually had on one side the inscription of one or both parts of the formula which bears witness that "there is no god save "Allah" and Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah", and a verse from the Qur'an. The other side bore the caliph's name, that of his governor if it was struck in one of the Arab provinces, the place and date of minting.Some or parts of these formulae were also inscribed on the seal of the caliph, the sultân or the governor.

Professor Grohman[2] has supplied us with valuable information about the money issued in early Muslim Egypt, and how it was weighed and accepted as good coins. This procedure was very common in tax receipts. The payments had to be made with coins of true or weight-value, estimated according to the Standard weight deposited in the Treasury. However, difficulties for the finance authorities were sometimes caused by the public's use of debased money for tax payments. The coins had to be weighed, and the actual value determined. The government was forced to issue its requisitions in "numbered" dînârs and to convert the actual payments in coins into their value according to their weight.

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[1]Ibid., Vol. III, p. 465.

[2]Arabic Papri in the Egyptian Library, vol II. Legal Texts, nos 81, 82, p. 47.

3. Expansion to the Muslim Empire:

(A) The Conquest of Transoxiana :

'Abd al-Malik was succeeded by his son Walìd who was caliph for ten years (86-96/705-715).[1] This was a period of conquests, prosperity and wealth. The Muslim empire was extended in the east and the west. Al-Walìd relieved his subjects from some of the burdens of life. He was fond of erecting public buildings like the great mosques of Damascus, Madinah and Jerusalem. He was, however, faulty in speech. His father 'Abd al-Malik once blamed him, saying "Only he who speaks their language will rule the Arabs." Al-Walìd confined himself with a number of grammarians in an attempt to improve his language; after a long time, he emerged with speech more faulty than it had been.[2]

During the reign of al-Walìd, three generals became prominent as conquerors: Qutayba (ibn Muslim), Muhammad ibn al-Qâsim al-Thaqafì, and Mùsà ibn Nusayr.

Qutayba was appointed by Hajjàj deputy governor of Khuràsàn, in 86 A.H. He marched to Balkh where he was joined by its chieftains and dihqàns (landlords). After crossing the river Oxus he met the king of Sughànyàn who offered him many gifts and surrendered his country. The next year he invaded Bîkund, lying between Bukhàrà and the Oxus raided the Sughd, and defeated them. Qutayba appointed a deputy governor as ruler, but the Sughd took advantage of his absence and killed his deputy. Qutayba returned, took the city by storm, gained much booty, and returned to Merv. In the next year (88/707), Qutayba appointed his brother, Muslim, as lieutenant governor of Merv, and continued his march to Bukhàrà which he conquered with great difficulty.

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[1]Fakhrì, p. 113.

[2]'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Marwàn did not respond to the demand of his brother 'Abd al-Malik to cede from his office as crown prince. But his death before his brother's paved the way for Walìd to succeed his father.

After the conquest of Bukhàrà, Qutayba introduced civil and military reforms. The national spirit which prompted the Arabs to claim entire rights as a military class, limited the number of Persians in the Muslim armies in Khuràsàn (composed of 9,000 from Basra and al-Aliya; 7,000 from Bakr; 10,000 from Kùfa). Among those 47,000 Arabs there were only 7,000 of the Mawàlì under the leadership of Hayyàn al-Nabatì, a Daylamite or Khurâsànite.[1] Qutayba however, compelled the inhabitants of Bukhàra and the other conquered countries to supply him with between 10,000 and 20,000 supplementary for ces from local troops. In 93/711-712 Qutayba secured Khwarâzm without blood-shed; he conquered Samarqand by force, appointed his brother 'Abd Allàh as his deputy governor, and returned to Merv. By this conquest of Samarqand and Bukhàrà, Qutaba established his position in Trans-oxiana. Yet the Sughd submitted the Arab rule only in name; their country was exposed to continual raids and they had to suffer great perils.[2]

Qutayba extended the Muslim territories even further east. He crossed the Oxus on his way to Bùkhàrà, Kush, and Nasaf;[3] he next marched to Farghàna on the border of Turkistan. He proceeded to Khujanda where he met considerable resistance but ultimately gained a brilliant victory[4] After which he marched to Kàshàn the capital of Farghàna, seized it and returned to Merv.[5]

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[1]Ibn al-Athìr, vol. V, p. 6.

[2]Ibn al-Athir vol IV, p. 236, Gibb, pp. 47-48.

[3]Balàdhuri, Futùh al-Buldan, p. 437, Gibb, pp. 48-49.

[4]Tabarì, vol. VIII, p. al.

[5]Ibid., vol. VIII, p. 96.

As a result of the Muslim conquests of Transoxiana a large number of its inhabitants embraced Islam. The conquerors made various efforts to proselytize and tried to encourage attendance at the Friday prayers in the mosques by offering rewards of money. They allowed the Qur'ān to be recited in Persian instead of in Arabic so that it might be understood by all.[1]

(B) The Conquest of China Attempted :

During the reign of Walìd, an attempt was made to conquer China, known to the Arabs even before the rise of Islam Tradition ascribes to Muhammad the saying, "Seek knowledge, even unto China." Commercial relations between Arabia and China had been established long before his birth. It was at the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.) that mentioned is first made of the Arabs in Chinese annals; they note the rise of the Muslim power in Madinah and briefly describe the religious observances of the new faith. When Yazdagird, the last Sàsànid king of Persia, had died, his son, Fìrùz, had appealed to China for help against the Arab invadors; but the emperor had replied that Persia was too distant from him to send troops. He is said, however, to have dispatched an ambassador to the Arab court to plead the cause of the fugitive prince, probably also with instructions to ascertain the extent and power of the new kingdom that had arisen in the west; Caliph 'Uthmàn is said to have sent one of the Arab generals to accompany the Chinese ambassador on his return in 651 A.D. This first Muslim envoy was honourably received by the emperor.[2]

In the reign of Walìd, the Arab conqueror Qutaybah (ibn Muslim) was not content with his conquest of Transoxiana. At the head of a huge

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[1]Nirshakhì wasf (description of Bukhàra), p.6. Arnold, the Preaching of Islam, p. 213.

[2]Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, pp. 294-295.

army, he proceeded to the frontiers of China in 96/715. On his way he received news of the death of Caliph Walîd, but this did not prevent him from proceeding. As he drew near the country, he sent a deputation to the king of China. After the exchange of messages, the king of China addressed the Arab deputation in these words : "Go to your leader and ask him to go away; I have heard of his greed and the scanty number of his supporters, or I will send to you those who will destroy him and you." The head of the Arab deputation replied : "How come that he whose horses start in your land and in the land where olives are grown has such few supporters?[1] As to your threatening us with death, we have our fates; if the end of our lives comes, the most honoured we shall feel if we are killed. We neither hate nor are afraid to die." Perceiving the danger the emperor of China asked: "What will satisfy your leader?" The head of the deputation replied: "He has sworn not to go away unless he takes possession of your land, prints his seal on your royal youth, and receives the capitation tax." The emperor said: "We release him from his oath by seding him a load of our soil to tramp on, some of our royal youths to imprint them with his seal, and some Chinese coins as a capitation tax." He, therefore, ordered gold platters to be filled with soil, silk clothing and four royal youths to be prepared. Then he dismissed the deputation. Qutayba accepted the money, printed his seal on the youths and returned them to the king, tramped on the soil and eventually returned to Merv, the capital of Khurâsân.[2]

As Professor Arnold states, the Chinese annals mention an ambassador named Sulaymân who was dispatched by the Umayyad Caliph Hishàm in 108/726 to the emperor Hsuan Tsung. The diplomatic relations between the Arabs and the Chinese Empire assumed a new importance at

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[1]He meant the Farther Magrib (Morocco) where olive trees are planted in the lands stretching west as far as the Atlantic.

[2]Tabarî, vil. VIII, pp. 100-101.

the close of this emperor's reign, when, driven from his throne by an usurper, he abdicated in your favour of his son, Su Tsung (726—A.D.). The latter sought the help of the Abbasid Caliph, el-mansur, and with his assistance, the emperor succeeded in recovering his two capitals, Si-ngan-fu and Ho-nanfu. At the end of the war, these Arab troops did not return to their own country, but intermarried and settled in China.[1]

(C) The Conquest of Sind :

The first Muslim expedition to India was undertaken fifteen years after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Since then the Arabs had been pouring into this country from the north-west until the eighteenth century. some of them settled permanently there and set up states which greatly influenced Islamic civilization.

When Walìd son 'Abd al-Malik, (86-96/705-7.15) becáme caliph, Hajjàj entrusted the conquest of India to his nephew, Muhammad, son of Qàsim. He marched to Sind in 89/708, besieged the port of Deibul at the principal mouth of Indus. (It now lies far inland). He seized it by storm and built a mosque. He proceeded to Bèrùn where he was welcomed by its people, admitted to the city, and where he offered peace.

Ibn al-Qàsim continued his conquests in this country until he reached the River Indus (Nahr al-Sind), then renamed Mihràn. There he was met by Dàhir, the king of the Sind, whose soldiers were fighting on the backs of elephants. The two armies battled strenuously until the murder of Dàhir and the defeat of his army. Ibn al-Qàsim was able to extend his conquests in all parts of Sind, continuing until he reached Multàn, a famous centre for Indian pilgrims in the southern Punjab.[2]

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[1]Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, pp. 295-296.

[2]Balàdhuri, Futùh al Buldàn, p. 445.

However, the supplies of the Muslims were exhausted and they were finally forced to eat their animals to avoid starvation.

Ibn al-Qàsim killed the guards of the famous temple al-Budd (Buddha). The Multàn was then a centre of pilgrimage to which people came from all parts of Sind to worship the idols, to which vows were made and huge sums of money consecrated.[1] This incidents frightened the Indians to much that their king fled, was pursed and killed. His wife and other members of his house chose to die rather than suffer dishonour. They set fire to their palace and were burnt with all their treasures. As Yàqût[2] states, the Arabs call the Multàn "The Gateway of India and the House of God", because until its capture, they had found nothing but hardship in India, but after seizing the Budd they became wealth from the abundant gold they found there.

Ibn al-Qàsim seized Brahmanàbàd, i.e. the hilly state of Baluchistan, and after he crossed the Bayas, the Multàn surrendered.[3]

(D) The Conquest of North Africa :

After their conquest of Egypt, the Arabs extended their conquests to Cyrenaica, then to Ifrîqiyya (the present Tunisia). The foundation of the city of Qayrawân by 'Uqba (50/670) supplied the Arabs with a fortified garrison that served as a military base from which they were able to spread Islam in these parts. However, 'Uqba's success in spreading Islam among the Berbers was slow. They offered vigorious resistance to the advancement of Arab forces which defeated the Byzantines in several battles.

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[1]Ibid., p. 445 et. sq.

[2]Geographical dictionary, Multàn, s.v.

[3]Muir, the Caliphate, pp. 353-4.

Although the forces of the new Umayyad governor Abû 'l-Muâjir reached Carthage and made an armistice with the Berbers, he was unable to resist the Byzantine attacks. Eventually, his policy in North Africa met with success, and Islam spread among the great Sanhâja tribe, a group of whom participated in the army dispatched by Abû 'l-Muhâjir who conquered Algiers and was able to reach Tlimcen, the seat of the Middle Maghrib.

When the command of the military expedition was again entrusted to 'Uqba he put an end to the Berber resistance in the Middle Maghrib and with his troops poured into the Farther Maghrib. Thus, he was the first Arab conqueror to set foot in these lands. In fact, his troops penetrated the west region until they he reached Tangiers, and the Sanhâja tribe in Farther Maghrib began to embrace Islam. 'Uqba's endeavours also met with success in the Rîf region. He then advanced to the Near Sûs, defeated the Masmûdî tribe and then proceeded to the Farther Sûs. His forces advanced as for as Aghât, built a mosque in the city of Mâmassa and appointed persons to teach the principles of Islam. Some historians maintain the 'Uqba's forces advanced even to the Sudan and conquered Ghana.[1]

Indeed, 'Uqba advanced as far as the northern boundaries of the Sudan.[2] He is considered the first missionary and pioneer who reached these distant lands, and the first who opened the route before the traders who began to penetrate the desert to Audaghost.[3]

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[1]Dela Chapelle, Hèsperis (1930), tome XI, p. 24.

[2]Besset, Mission en Senegal, p. 446.

[3]See my Intisâr al-Islam fi'l-Qârrah al-Ifrìqìyyah, pp. 87-89.

"Uqba, however, was killed by the Byzantines in the battle of Tahûda on his return to Qayrawân and his endeavours were almost frustrated. The Berber tribes resented, marched eastward, and entered Qayrawân.

'Uqba was succeeded by Zuhayr ibn Qays who avenged his predecessor's murder. He crushed the Byzantine resistance but was killed while he was engaged in a campaign with the Byzantine fleet on the coast of Tripoli. His successor Hassân ibn al-Nu'màn showed great zeal in spreading the faith. He fought against the Byzantines, whose hopes of restoring the Maghrib and ending Muslim domination were revived. He defeated their forces, and proceeded to fight against the leader and prophetess, al-Kâhina,[1] and her followers.[2] However he was defeated and forced to retreat to Tripoli where he stayed five years until he returned to the Maghrib and defeated the prophetess.

As a result of this battle, the political power of the Berbers was crushed, and North Africa fell into the hands of the Arabs. Peace was concluded on condition that the Berbers would furnish 12,000 men to the ranks of the Arab troops.[3] "By this device of enlisting the Berbers in their armies", says Sir Thomas Arnold,[4] "the Arab generals hoped to win them to their own religion by the hope of booty".

Hassân's talents began to manifest themselves in spreading Islam by using Arabic in government offices and treating Berbers and Arabs equally. In spite of his brilliant achievement, Hassân was dismissed from

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[1]i.e. the divine or priestess, her real name was probably Dahia.

[2]Salâwì, Istiqsâ, vol. I, p. 92.

[3]Fournel, Les Berbères, tome I, p. 224.

[4]The Preaching of Islam, p. 313.

office and succeeded by Mûsa ibn Nusayr who completed the conquest of Spain.

The army of seven thousand Berbers which sailed from North Africa to Spain in 92/711 under the command of Târiq was composed of recent converts to Islam, "and their conversation is expressly said to have been sincere: learned Arabs and theologians were appointed to read and explain to them the sacred words of the Qur'ān, and instruct them in all and every one of the duties of their new religion."[1]

Mûsâ showed his zeal for the progress of Islam by devoting the large sums of money granted him by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik, to the purchase of young captives of noble origin whom he thought would willingly embrace Islam. Those who showed exceptional ability were granted liberty, appointed to high commands in the army, and promoted according to their merit.[2]

The Umayyad Caliphs also showed great zeal in promoting Islam among the Berbers. When the pious Caliph, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azîz, appointed Ismâ'îl ibn 'Abd Allâh governor of North Africa, he sent with him ten theologians to instruct the Muslim Berbers in the ordinances of their faith and interpret the verses of the Qur'ān. Up to that time they had not recognized that their new religion forbade indulgence in wine.[3]

Some historians conjecture that Islam at this time was predominant throughout the whole of North Africa. However this seem fallacious because the faith did not become firmly rooted until several centuries had passed. It was not universal among the Berbers until it assumed the form

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[1]Maqqarî Nafh al-Tîb, vol. I, p. 253.

[2]Ibn 'Idhârî al-Bayân al-Mughrib (ed. Leyden), vol. I, p. 24.

[3]Ibn 'Abd al-Hakim, Futûh Misr wa'l-Maghrib, p. 106. Arnold, pp. 313-314.

of a national movement, closely connected with the native dynasties. This attracted to Islam, Berbers who had previously looked upon acceptance of this faith as a sign of lost political independence.[1] Hence, independent Maghribite states were established in North Africa. Among these states were the state of Tâhart, established by Ibn Rustam of the Ibâdî group of the Khâritite sect of Sijilmâsa (the present Tâfîlât) established by the Banû Midâr with the help of the Znâta tribe which adopted the doctrines of the Sufrî group of the Khârijites, Tlimeen (in Algeria), established by the Banù Qurra of the Sanhâja tribe, Barrghwâta state in Tânisnâ on the Atlantic coast.

In 172/788, the Idrîsid dynasty was established by Idrîs ibn 'Ad Allâh, 'Alîd who fled to the Further Maghrib after the great battle of Fakh It was the first independent state that promoted Islam in these lands.

(E) The Conquest of Spain :

Mûsa and Tàriq were able to conquer all of Africa except the strong forts of Cueta on the channel of al-Zuqàq. "Like the rest of the southern shore of the Mediterranean", says Lane-Poole, "Ceuta belonged to the Greek Emperor; but it was so far removed from Constantinople that it was thrown upon the neighbouring kingdom of Spain for support, and while still nominally under the authority of the Emperor, looked to the King to Toledo for assistance and protection. It is not likely that all the aid that Spain could have given would have availed against the urging tide of Saracen invasion; but as it happened, there was a quarrel at that time between Julian the governor of Cueta and Roderick the King of Spain which opened the door of the Arabs.[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 314.

[2]The Moors in Spain p. 4.

Count Julian allied with the party of Achilla to help him depose Roderick the king of Spain to avenge the maltreatment of his daughter.[1] He joined the conspirators and found in the armies of the Berbers and the Arabs in North Africa the best means to achieve his ends. He visited Mûsa and told him that the war between them had ended, and spoke to him of the conquest of Spain describing to him its beauty and its riches. Mûsa became interested and, thinking seriously of what Julian had related, made an agreement to support the Muslims.[2]

Mûsa, however, referred this matter to Caliph Walîd, who hesitated, then ordered him to examine the road to make sure that Julian did not mean to deceive the Muslims. In 91/710, Mûsa sent Tarìq son of Mãlìk, à Berber, (after whom the island of Tarìq lying in the channel is named) 500 soldiers, 400 infantry and 100 horsemen. Tariq crossed the sea in four Julian's ship and invaded some of the ports of southern Spain with Julian's aid. He returned with much booty after he was convinced of the internal weakness of Spain.

The success of Tarìq in this expedition encouraged Mûsa. He appointed Tàriq as leader of his army and ruler of Tangier. In 92 A.H. (711 A.D.), Tàrìq crossed the sea in four ships, which Julian had prepared for him, and marched at the head of 7,000 Muslims.

The ships dropped anchor in front of the Green Island (al-Jazìra al-Khadrà') at the lion's rock, which has borne the name of Tàriq to the present day (Jabal Tàriq, i.e. Gibraltar). King Roderick heard of the Muslim landing while he was engaged with Achilla's revolt in Pampelon in northern Spain. Realizing the danger facing his country, he hastened

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[1]Maqqarì Nafh al-Tib, vol.I, p. 109.
Bradly, The Goths, p. 358.

[2]Ibid., vol. I, pp. 119-120.

southwards with a huge army, as large as 100,000 men according to Arab authors.

This huge and well equipped army did not discourage Tàriq who proceeded to seize forts and cities. However, he sent to Mûsa for supplies, so that he might be able to face Roderick's army. Mûsa sent him 5,000 men, swelling his forces to 12,000.

The Muslim general met Roderick's army on the banks of the little river which the Arabs call Wàdî Bekka near the Guadalete, which runs into the straits by Cape Tarafalagar. Tàriq and his army assaulted the enemy until victory; Tàriq then attacked Roderick and killed him with his sword. It is said that Roderick was wounded and threw himself in the Lakka alley to be drowned and his body was carried away by the river to the ocean. However, his final fate remains a secret to the present day. "The victory of the Guadalete,"[1] says Lane-Poole", put all of Spain into the hands of the Moors. Tàriq and his twelve thousand Berbers had by a single action won the whole peninsula, and it needed but ordinary energy and promptness to reduce the feeble resistance which some of the cities still offered."

After consulting the chiefs of his army, Tàriq saw that if the Muslims did not continue the fight, they would be exposed to danger by giving the Goths time to assemble their forces and to unify. He continued to penetrate Spain, dividing his army into three regiments which he spread over the Iberian Pensula. He sent 700 horsemen to Cordova. Most of its inhabitants had moved to Toledo, then the capital of their empire, and only the prince and 400 horsemen remained in Cordova.

A shepherd guided the Muslims to an opening in the city's strong high wall, and assisted by nature, they succeeded in their venture. Rain

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[1]The Moors in Spain, p. 23.

and snow fell, so the enemy could not hear the galloping of the hoses. The Muslims crossed the Gordova river and surprised the guards who had taken shelter from the cold and rain. They climbed the walls, killed some of the guards, opened the gate of the fort and seized the city. Its prince took shelter in the city's western church for three months until forced to escape. The general captured him and then gathered the Jews of this city where they settled with an army battalion.[1]

The Jews had a hand in the Arab conquests. They especially facilitated the Arab conquest of the province of Rayya and its largest city, Malaga, plus the province of Elvira and its largest city of Granada, where many Jews had settled. The city of Orikuela (Ariola) opened its gates to the Arabs, and Toledo, the capital of the Gothic, followed its example. Its inhabitants took shelter in a city behind the mountain.

The Muslims sent the Jews to Toledo and left with them a group of soldiers for its defence. This was their policy in all the cities they conquered. They pursued the defeated inhabitants of Toledo through the Guadalaxara (Wàldì al-Hijàra, i.e. the valley of stones) until they reached Madinahceli; next, they followed the Spanish soldiers as far as Galicia in the northwest of Spain.

Having heard of Tàriq's career of conquest in Spain, Mûsa crossed the Straits in the summer of 712 A.D. with a large army of 18,000 Arabs and Berbers in order to take his full share of the glory. After capturing Carmona, which was one of Spain's strongest cities, Mûsa preceded to Seville, then the most important and the most beautifully built of Spain's cities. It had been the capital of Spain until the Goths had made Toledo their capital. This city firmly with-stood Mûsa several months before it finally fell. He continued to capture one city after another until he reached Merida which some kings of Spain had made their capital and which was

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[1]Maqqarì, Nafh al-Tib, vol. I, pp. 123-125.

famous for its castles, its factories, and its churches. The Muslims seized it with great difficulty.[1]

The conquests of Mûsa extended to Barcelona in the east, Nabronne in Alcarve and Cadiz in the southwest, and Calica in the northwest. He joined Tàriq somewhere in the province of Talavera and demoted him for his disobedience. He beat him, reproached him for exceeding his instructions. demanded the riches and the spoils he had seized, and put him in prison.[2]

The aims of Mûsa did not stop at the pyrenees; he decided to continue his conquests in the south of present day France, head east until he would reach Constantinople (which the Arabs had failed to seize), and then continue to Damascus, the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate, thus making the Mediterranean an Arabian lake.

When news reached Walìd, the Caliph commanded an end to this European expansion and recalled Mûsa and Tàriq. The caliph did not want to expose the Muslims to danger, and dreaded the increasing influence of Mûsa who might conceivably have proclaimed the independence of countries he conquered. Mûsa went to Damascus in 96 A.H. He had made his son, 'Abd al-Aziz, its governor and his other son, 'Abd Allàh governor of Ifriqiyya. Before, Mûsa's arrival in Damascus, Walìd fell very sick. His brother, Crown Prince Sulaymàn, asked spoils and curiosities which this leader possessed. Mûsa ignored the advice and consequently aroused the antagonism of Sulaymàn. As to Tàriq, his life ended in mystery as it had started. All that the historians have recorded is that he moved with his master Mûsa, who succeeded his father in ruling

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[1]Soon after its people attacked the Muslims and killed eighty of them, and Musa had to send his son who seized it a new.

[2]Maqqarì, Nafh al-Tib, vol. I, pp. 125, 127-128.

Spain, organised the government and a special council for compiling legal codes suitable for its people, taking a particular interest in agriculture and the constration of construct roads. He released Spain from the tyranny of the Goths and decreased the taxes which had overburdened them; equality prevailed among the classes in the nation without any religious or racial differences. He also protected the inhabitants' properties, religious practices, their souls and their freedom, and encouraged the Arabs to intermarry and intermingle with them. He himself married the widow of Redorick who retained her own religious convictions.[1]

(4) Sulaymân :

In the regin of Walîd the provinces of the Umayyads expanded to the east and the west. In the reign of his brother, Sulaymàn, there were no conquests other than those of Tabaristan and Jurjàn by Yazid, son of Muhallab, the governor of the eastern provinces, and the siege of Constantinople.

Walîd had begun preparations for an expedition to seize Constantinople but had died before this expedition started. When Sulaimàn succeeded to the throne he continued the expedition and encamped at Marj Dàbiq, a distance of four leagues (about 16 miles) from Alepo. The Byzantine emperor, Anastasius II defended the capital of his empire. He sent an expedition to the forts to prevent supplies from reaching the Muslim soldiers; this attempt failed and the Byzantine, Leo the Azurian (who aimed at seizing the throne), joined the Muslim army at Asia Minor. The Muslims seized Asia Minor city by city until they crossed the sea and reached the wall of Constantinople. Their fleet followed from Syrian and Egyptian ports and took part in the siege of the Byzantine capital.

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[1]Maqqarì, Nafh al-Tib, vol. I, p. 110.

Leo deserted the Muslim lines and declared himself emperor after Anastasius. The Muslim siege by sea tightened around the city and was followed by naval attacks. Leo gradually admitted their ships, until they fell easy prey to the Greek guns. The Muslims suffered from hunger and disease and many of them died. Thus this expedition failed, as did the one which had preceded it in the regin of Mu'àwiya I.

Sulaymàn's reign was marked by the oppression of the governors of his brother, al-Walìd. Among those were Muhammad ibn al-Qàsim in India, Qutayba ibn Muslim in Transoxiana, Mûsa ibn Nusayr in Spain and the family of al-Hajjàj in Iraq.

Sulaymàn hated Hajjàj, his relatives and his governors. As a result, Hajjàj was afraid that Walìd would die before him and that he would fall into the hands of Sulaymàn. The cause of the fear was Hajjàj's removal of Sulaymàn from the succession to the caliphate and his installation of al-Walìd's son.This had been desired by Walìd. When Sulaymàn became caliph, he put Ibn al-Qàsim, the nephew of Hajjàj in chains, sending him from Sind to Iraq. Ibn al-Qàsim was loved by the people of Sind, and his departure in chains evoked grief. When he reached Iraq he was imprisoned in Wàsit, tortured, and finally killed. Thus ended the life of this leader whose splendid accomplishments were forgotten by the new Caliph.

Qutayba had also agreed with Walìd to exclude Sulaymàn from the succession. Mûsa was accused of hurrying to meet Caliph Walìd with spoils and èiches. He had disobeyed Sulaymàn's request to delay coming until al-Walìd died. Sulaymàn's hostile feelings toward these men were due to personal motives to acquire wealth and power. The leaders found it useless to remain faithful to their Caliph, after realising that their fidelity brought them nothing but harm.

Sulaymàn remained in the caliphate no more than two years. He was famous for his eloquence, contrary to his brother, Walìd. He was greedy and greatly fond of women and food. Luxury and extravagance deteriorated his court. He increased the number of eunuchs in his palace and generally extended his vices to the governors of the provinces. It is said that Sulaymàn, clothed in a green garment and a turban, looked in the minor and said: "I am a youthful king." Telling one of his slave girls looking at him, he said: What are you looking at?" She replied in these two lines of verse:

"You could be a lovely king if you were immortal, but there is no immortality for a human-being.

In what I know of you, there exists no human defect that exists among human beings, save that you are perishable."[1]

(5) 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz :

'Umar is regarded as among the best Umayyad Caliphs. He was learned, religious and pious. He is also regarded as the pioneer in spreading Islam and glorifying this faith. His reign was bright page in the history of a period characterized by blood-shed and despotism. Muslims compared him to his grand-father, 'Umar I, for his justice and piety.

'Umar was born in Hulwàn, about twenty-four miles from Cairo. His father 'Abd al-'Aziz had made it the seat of his government. 'Abd al-'Aziz's tenure of office as governor of Egypt exceeded twenty years (65-86/684-705). Historians and poets sang praises of generosity and piety of this prince. He always sat among the Prophet's Companions and the narrators of the prophetic traditions. He listened to discourses on literature and poetry, so that his council became an academy for jurisprudents, men of learning and letters. 'Umar's mother was the daughter of 'Asim, son

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[1]Fakrì, p. 116.

of the second Caliph, 'Umar. She was a very kind hearted, religious and pious woman.

'Umar II learned the Qur'ān when he was young. His father sent him to Madinah to acquire further learning. He distinguished himself in religious studies, related the prophetic traditions and composed poetry. He remained in Madinah until his father died and his brother, 'Abd al-Malik, became Caliph. Then 'Umar settled in Damascus until his nephew, Walìd, succeeded to the throne in 86/705. He assumed office as governor of Madinah, where he remained for seven years. When al-Walìd urged that his brother Sulaymàn be excluded from succession to the caliphate, 'Umar II refused to betray a person to whom he had already sworn allegiance.[1] When Sulaymàn became caliph he did not forget 'Umar's attitude towards him and made him his crown prince.[2]

'Umar II was among the outstanding Umayyad caliphs. Some historians considered his reign as distinguished as those of the first four Orthodox Caliphs or of Abu Bakr 'Umar. It is said; "The three caliphs are: Abù Bakr, 'Umar and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz."

The Caliphate of 'Umar II existed for only two years and five months. Had he remained a caliph longer, he would have written a glorious page in the history of Islam. It is no wonder, therefore, that when the tombs of the Umayyad Caliphs were unearthed after the rise of the 'Abbàsid empire, that of 'Umar II was untouched. His remained and was visited by many people according to the Arab historian and geographer, Mas'ùdi.

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[1]Suyùtì, Tàrikh al-Khulafà', p. 152.

[2]Fakhrì, p. 117.

(6) Fall of the Umayyads :

The death of 'Umar II marked the end of the glorious period in the history of the Umayyad Empire. The empire was thereafter beset by influence which weakened and finally destroyed it. 'Umar II was succeeded by a weak Caliph who sacrificed the well-being of the empire for their own pleasures. First came Yazìd ibn 'Abd al-Malik in 101/720, then his brother, Hishàm in 105/724, al-Walì inb Yàzid in 125/743, and finally Marwàn II in 127/744.

Among the cause which brought about the downfall of the Umayyad power was a conflict between crown princes. As soon as the first got into restricted power, he tried to exclude the other and replace him by one of his own sons. The enmity between the two spread dissension among all the members of that house. These disputes were not restricted to the leaders and the governors. No sooner had the second prince come to power than he made an example of those who had supported his rival.

Another factor in the decline was the tribal feuds which revived among the Arab tribes after the death of Yazìd ibn Mu'àwiya. However, the feuds themselves were not enough alone to hasten the decline of the Umayyad party which, as a political party, still maintained a firm structure. Some of the Umayyad caliphs indulged in personal extravagances which they adopted from the Byzantine court. This had a great effect on all of their empire. Caliph Yazìd I was known for his love of pleasure. Yazìd II was no better, nor was his son al-Walìd.

The Umayyad Empire was an Arab one, so that some historians have conjectured that they were prejudiced against non-Arabs (mawàlìs, clients, freedmen), treated them with contempt and overburdened them with taxes. There is no doubt that a strong spirit of nationalism (Shu'ûbiyya) developed among the Muslims. This movement sprang from the Arab's belief in the superiority of his race and language. It is no

wonder, therefore, that this attitude aroused the anger and discontent of the non-Arabs against the Umayyads. The non-Arabs, looking for an opportunity to attack, joined al-Mukhtàr and participated in the revolutions of Ibn al-Ash'ath, Yazìd ibn al-Muhallab, and in the movements of the political and religious parties such as the Khawàrij (Dissenters), the Murjites and the Mu'tazzalites. Their object was to bring down the Umayyad empire.

When the 'Abbàsid propaganda took effect, the discontented joined the 'Abbàsids in order to regain some of their usurped rights. The 'Abbàsids recognized the hatred which these people felt towards the Umayyads and thought its advisable to use them in spreading their cause.

Mas'ûdi[1] has discussed the causes which led to the fall of the Umayyads in the following words: "Umayyad chief who was acquainted with the history and affairs of this dynasty was asked, "What was the cause of the over throw of your empire?" He replied, "We were too concerned with our pleasure to investigate what was necessary to be done. We were unjust to our subjects who became disappointed and wished to be relieved of us. Our revenue collectors were assaulted by the people, and eventually deserted us. Our farms were in a state of ruin, and, consequently, our exchequers became empty. We trusted our ministers, but they gave priority to their own affairs and concealed matters from us. The salaries of our soldiers were not paid; their obedience to us vanìshed. Our enemies called upon them for help, and they supported them against us. Our enemies pursued us and we were incapable of resisting their attacks due to our scarcity of supporters. The concealment of news from us was one of the fundamental factors of the overthrow of our kingdom."

Note: The above material has been adapted from Hassan Ibrahim Hussain's *Islamic History and Culture.*

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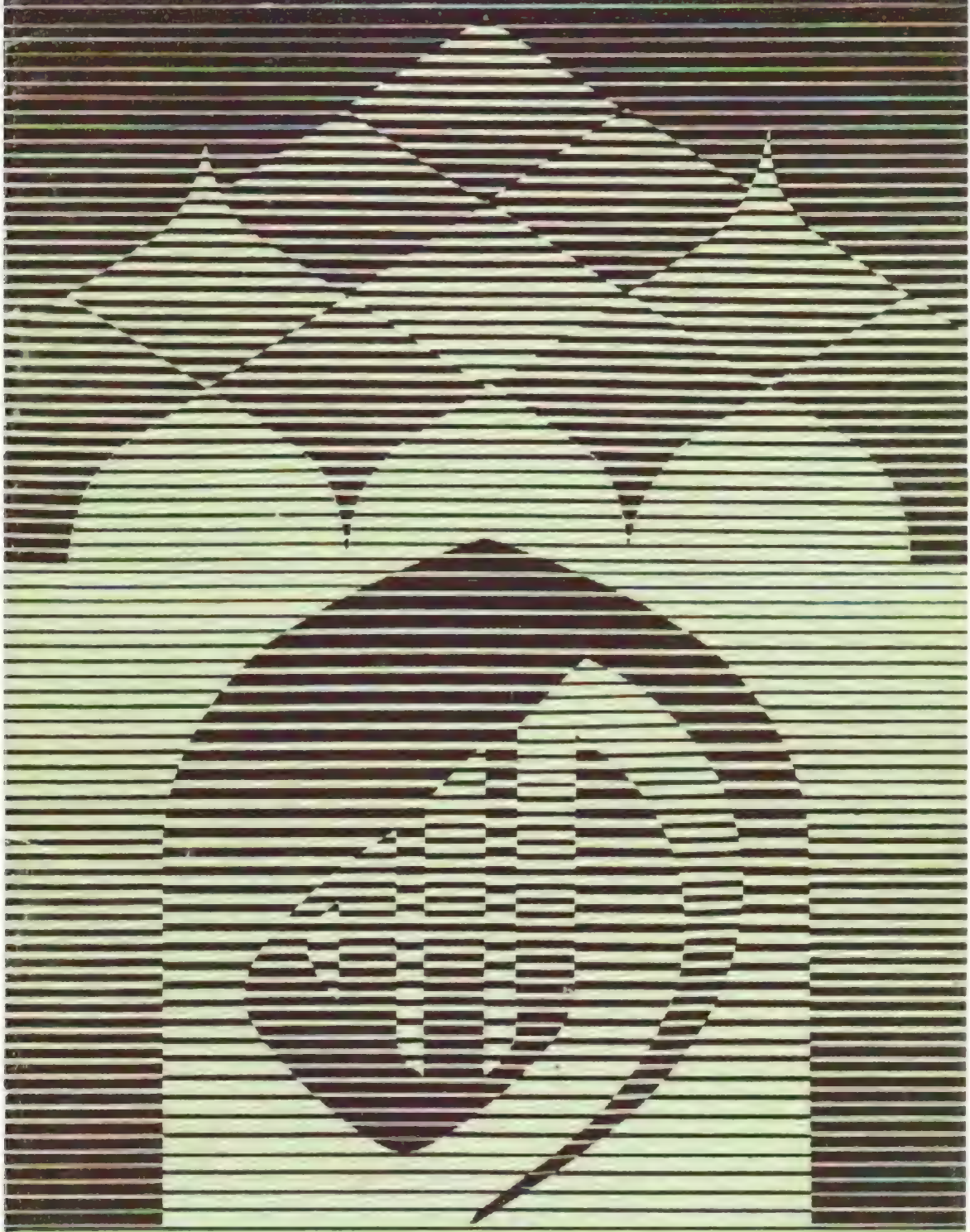
[1]Murùj, vol. II, p. 194.

ISLAMIC CORRESPONDENCE COURSE 24



EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM

UNIT: 24

AN OUTLINE OF EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM

Da'wah Academy
International Islamic University
Post Box No.1485, Islamabad (Pakistan)
Phone No.853195, 858640-3, 850751
Fax No.92-51-853360

ISLAMIC CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

(English)

Name of the publication:	An Outline of Early History of Islam (Abbasids)
Author:	Hassan Ibrahim Hassan
Title design:	Sy. Mubeenur Rehman
Printers:	IRI Press, International Islamic University, Islamabad.
Edition:	1996
Quantity:	

For correspondence:

Head, Islamic Correspondence Courses (English)

Da'wah Academy, International Islamic University

Post Box No.1485, Islamabad (Pakistan)

Phone No.853195, 858640-3, 850751

Fax No.92-51-853360

FOREWORD

Muslim communities all over the world are faced with a variety of challenges in their Dawah activities. One major challenge relates with the area of education. It is not easy to develop, in every community, an educational institution which may provide professional assistance and back up to members of community in acquiring Islamic knowledge and information. In some Muslim communities full time educational institutions have been established. In others, educational needs of the community are met through weekend programmes, seminars, symposia and other such activities.

Some Muslim communities have given serious thought to programmes of distance teaching, however, such programmes have not been materialized with proper know-how and professional assistance.

The Dawah Academy, at a humble level, is in the process of developing a series of correspondence courses in English and other languages. In order to develop a suitable introductory course on Islam as the way of life, we are introducing, at this point, material selected from existing Islamic literature.

Our next step will be to produce our own material in view of the needs of Muslim communities in various parts of the world. This will have two levels: first general level and second a post-graduate course on Islam. The present selection from Islamic literature deals with first level. This covers a variety of topics dealing with Islam as a complete way of life. We hope this course will provide initial information on important aspects of Islam.

We will greatly appreciate critical comments and observations of participants on this course. This will help us in development of our own material for both levels of study. Please do not hesitate to write to us if you have some suggestions to improve the material or methodology. Address all your observations at the following:

Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad,
Director General,
Dawah Academy,
International Islamic University,
P. O. Box No.1485,
Islamabad.
Phone No.853195, 858640-3, 850751
Fax No.92-51-853360

AN OUTLINE OF EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM (ABBASIDS)

1. Organization of the 'Abbàsids Propaganda

The 'Abbàsid, Imàm Muhammad ibn 'Ali, saw that the transfer of authority from one house to another must be preceded by preparing the minds of the people. He realized that any sudden change might end in failure and he was far-sighted enough to know that great precautions were necessary. He asked his followers to promote propaganda in the name of the chosen man of the house of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) (Al-Ridà min 'Ali Muhammad). He called upon the people to support the house without specifying any particular person, by using an ambiguous expression which might equally be applied to the descendants of 'Ali (RTA) and of 'Abbàs. It was only in strict secrecy that the propaganda was made in the name of the house of the latter since the designation of the name of the Imàm might expose him to oppression from the Umayyads. He found both Kùfa and Khuràsan good centres for spreading the cause, Shi'ism, and believed in the divine right of kings, which had prevailed in Persia since the Sassànid period.[1] Furthermore, the Persians had suffered much under the Umayyads.

In one of his addresses the 'Abbàsid Imàm Muhammad ibn 'Ali described the popular mood of the various Umayyad provinces in these words recorded by Muqaddasi:[2] "Kùfa and its sawàd[3] are 'Ali's partisans, those of Basra are Uthmàniyya,[4] who maintain neutrality, those of Mesopotamia are true Harùriyya,[5] those of Syria know no one except Mù'àwiya and (nothing except) obedience to the Banù Umayya, those of Mecca and Medina believe only in Abù Bakr and Umar. You have, therefore, to turn your efforts towards Khuràsàn. There, are found brave men of strong hearts, unaffected by passions and not distracted by heterodoxies. There also is found an army of brave strong men, of huge stature, thick moustaches and beards, with tremendous voices which inspire terror and fear."

This Imàm apparently understood the task of speaking for the cause. He appointed twelve chiefs (*naqibs*), assisted by fifty-eight missionaries, and confided to them the task of promoting the cause in secret, or pretending to spread it in the name of the house of Hàshim as a whole, in order to beguile the 'Alids. The missionaries soon succeeded in winning over a number of influential supporters. The Abbàsid views can be divided into two parts:

The first part started at the beginning of the first century of the Hijra era and ended by the alliance of Abù Muslim of Khuràsàn. The spread of this cause 'did not imply any force at that time, for the missionaries frequented the Muslim provinces for trade or pilgrimage to Makkah.

- The second part was started by the joining of Abù Muslim to the Abbàsid cause, and here the dispute between the Umayyads and the Abbàsids increased. This initiated the series of wars which ended in the fall of the Umayyads.

The intention of the Abbàsid leader Ibràhim to the Khuràsànid Abù Muslim fell into the hands of Marwàn II, the last of the Umayyad Caliphs. In this letter Ibràhim ordered his general to kill everyone in Khuràsàn who spoke Arabic. This incident resulted in the arrest of Ibràhim, his imprisonment in the city of Harràn, and finally his murder. Then Abù Salama undertook the task of spreading Abbàsid propaganda. When Ibràhim knew that this death was imminent, he nominated his brother Abù 'l-Abbàs as his successor, and conferred on him the task of promoting the propaganda and of moving to Kùfa. Meanwhile, Ibràhim's messenger hurried to Humayma, the Abbàsid headquarters and placed his will in the hands of Abu'l-Abbàs, who headed towards Kufa accompanied by the chieftains of the Abbàsid house, among whom were his brother Abù Jatar, the future caliph, Mansùr, his nephew, Isà ibn Musa and his uncle, 'Abd Allàh ibn 'Ali.

Yazid (ibn 'Umar ibn Hubayra), the leader of the Umayyads, was defeated in the outskirts of Kùfa and forced to retreat to Wàsit. Abù Salama encamped with his soldiers in Kufa in 132/749. Toward the end of this year, the black banner,[6] of the Abbàsids waved over the forts of Damascus. This marked the fall of the Umayyad Empire and transfer of power to the Abbàsids.

The first Abbasid Caliph, Abù'l-Abbàs al-Saffàh,[7] entrusted to his uncle, 'Abd Allàh, the fight against Marwàn II, the last Umayyad caliph. He pursued him to the Lower Zàb River in Iraq where many of Marwàn's men were killed and drowned. Marwàn retreated to Mawsil where he was defeated. He managed to escape to Harràn and crossed the Euphrates. 'Abd Allàh encamped at the gate of Harràn, seized the exchequer of Marwàn, and proceeded to Damascus. He besieged the city, and after capturing it, pursued Marwàn who had moved to Fustat in Egypt. The Abbàsid caliph wrote to his uncle, entrusting his brother, Sàlih ibn 'Ali, with the task of killing Marwàn. Marwàn proceeded to the village of Bùsir, in the province of Fayyùm, where he was killed by the Abbàsid soldiers. His head was sent to the Abbàsid Caliph.

2. Establishment of the Abbàsid Caliphate:

(A) Reign of Saffàh:

The members of the house of Abbàs and the chief Muslim leaders swore allegiance to Abù al-Abbàs (al-Saffah) as their caliph, although his brother Abù Ja'far was older. The reason was that Abù al-Abbàs' mother was an Arab, whereas the mother of Abù Ja'far was a slave girl.

Saffàh then moved to Anbàr, west of the Euphrates and ten leagues from the future Abbàsid capital of Baghdad. He spent the greater part of his reign fighting the Arab leaders who supported the Umayyads. He eliminated them, except for Abd ar-Rahmàn who soon afterwards

established the Umayyad dynasty in Spain. Saffàh also determined to purge some of his supporters. He killed Abù Salama, well known as the vizier of the house of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), as well as Ibn Hubayra, one of the leaders of the Umayyad Caliph Marwàn II after granting him his freedom. Before he was able to kill the great general Abù Muslim, Saffàh himself died.

The caliphate of Saffàh lasted four years and nine months. He died in 136 A.H. in Anbàr which he had established as the seat of his government. He was no more than thirty-three years old. Some have held that he was twenty-nine.

(B) Reign of Mansùr:

i) System of the Abbàsid Caliphate:

Before the first Abbàsid Caliph, Saffàh, died, he named as successor his brother 'Abù Ja'far, then Isa Ibn Mùsa. Isa sent Abù Ja'far news of his brother's death and swore allegiance to him.

The second Abbàsid Caliph, who assumed the title of Mansùr, laid the foundations of the government which was adopted in the early Abbàsid period. These had prevailed in the East and were familiar to the Persians since the time of Xerxes. The Abbàsids were able to rule their empire in much the same way that the Sassànids had done before.

Under the Abbàsids the caliphate developed as a political system. This dynasty came into existence with the support of the Persians who bore ill-will towards the Umayyads for social and political discrimination. The Abbàsids followed the example of the Umayyads in proclaiming their sons, brothers or even both, as their successors. The Persian believed in the theory of the divine right of kings. The Abbàsid Caliph was in their point of view a person who ruled them and derived his supreme authority

directly from God and not from the people. This becomes apparent from Mansùr's words: "I am the Sultàn of God on His earth". This differs as a political system from the caliphate which, under the first four caliphs, derived its authority from the people.

The Abbàsids established their right to exercise supreme power because they were the inheritors of the house of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). They tried to maintain the caliphate as a theocratic dynasty in which supremacy lay in the hands of the theologians. They took a keen interest in maintaining this concept because their powers were based in it. They did not desire to be accepted as mere monarchs but also as religious heads, so that their subjects would realise that their government was a religious one. The Abbàsids replaced the Umayyads, whom pious men had condemned as worldly people, interested only in their court in Damascus and their palaces in the desert. The Abbàsids claimed a divine authority and maintained a religious aspect.[8] They took as their insignia the Prophet's cloak and sceptre when the Caliphate oath of allegiance was given to them or when they attended religious ceremonies.

The Abbàsid caliphs also assumed title of "Imām", leader of the Muslim community, in order to emphasize the religious significance of the caliphate. This title (leader, Amīr) had been applied only to the person who led the Muslims in prayers under the Orthodox and the Umayyad Caliphs, while the other major Muslim group, the Shī'ites or adherents of 'Ali's cause had used it for the members of the 'Alid house.[9]

The Abbàsids adopted the Umayyad traditions in proclaiming more than one crown prince. Indeed they went too far in adopting this rule. The first Abbàsid Caliph (Saffàh) proclaimed his brother, Abù Ja'far (Al-

GENEALOGY OF THE EARLY ABBASID CALIPHS

(132-232/750-847)

Hashim

Abd al-Muttalib

Abbas

Abd Allah

Ali

Muhammad	Abd Allah	Musa	Dawud	Sulayman
Ibrahim	1. **Saffah** (132/750)	2. **Mansur** (136/754)		3. **Mahdi** (158/775)
4. **Hadi** (169/785)	5. **Harun** (170/786)		Ibrahim	Mansur
6. **Hadi** (193/809)	7. **Ma'mun**	8. **Mu'tasim** (218/833)		
9. **Amin** (193/809)	Muhammad	10. **Mutawakkil** (232/833)		

Mansùr), and his nephew ('Isà ibn Mùsà) as his successors, one to follow the other. When Mansùr became caliph, he excluded 'Isà and proclaimed his son Mahdī as his first successor and appointed Isa as second crown prince. Again, when Mahdī became caliph, he excluded 'Isà and proclaimed his sons Hàdī and Hàrùn as his successors. Hàdi, in turn, intended to exclude his brother, Hàrùn, who was urged to relinquish his title as crown prince to Hàdī's son, Ja'far. However, Hàdi died before carrying out his plan.

When Hàrùn sat on the throne of the caliphate he appointed his three sons: Adīn, Ma'mùn and Mu'taman as his crown princes, divided his empire among them, and gave each of them the chance to defend his rights.[10] This procedure naturally led to revolts and civil wars after Harun's death. The Caliph Wàthiq, however, abandoned this practice. When he was asked in his last illness to recommend his son (Muhammad) to succeed him, he did not approve but said: "God will not behold me assume it (the Caliphate) alive and dead," thus following the example of the Orthodox Caliph 'Umar I and the Umayyad Mu'àwiya II.

It is evident that this policy provoked hatred among the members of the ruling house; because no sooner did each caliph assume his power than he endeavoured to oppress those who had supported his rival. The rivalry that arose among the members of the ruling house threatened the integrity of the Abbàsid dynasty.

However, the system of appointing one or two crown princes was continued in order to maintain succession to the caliphate in the Abbàsid house. It also gave rise to the pomp and glory which surrounded the Abbàsid Caliphs and which differed from the simplicity which characterized the Umayyad house. Another difference between the Umayyad and the Abbàsid Caliphates was this: the Arab element exercised absolute authority under the Umayyad rule while the authority of the Persian element prevailed under the Abbàsids. The seventh Abbàsid

Caliph Ma'mun was the son of a Persian woman, and he himself married a Persian woman.

ii) Important Events in Mansùr's Reign:

Mansùr is considered the second founder of the Abbàsid dynasty as was 'Abd al-Malik with respect to Umayyad dynasty. During Mansùr's reign great events took place:

Perhaps the most difficult problem which Mansùr had to overcome was the appearance of the 'Alid party, now relying on the sword after it had been dependent upon diplomacy and intrigue. As we shall see later, the defeat of Muhammad the Pure Soul, and his brother Ibràhim, became this Caliph's chief concern until he defeated the 'Alid's in the great battle of Bàkhmrà om 145 A.H. (762 A.D.). Among the difficulties that Mansùr had to overcome was that the Ràwandis worshipped him as a God. He, however, looked upon them as heretics.

In the reign of Mansùr, the city of Baghdad was founded and became the capital of the Abbàsid Empire and the centre of trade and culture.

The author Fakhri[11] describes the Caliph Mansùr in these words "Mansùr was the greatest and the most determined, wise, learned, and the soundest of monarchs. He was a good administrator, dignified, good natured in private, and one of the most forbearing of men in play or jest. But when he put on his robes and went out to preside over the public council, his eyes reddened and his attributes became different. One day he said to his children; 'My children! When you see that I have assumed my robes and emerged to council, do not let any one approach me."

However, after the fall of the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus, the influence of the Abbàsids was generally weakened in Spain. Conflict

among the Arab tribes was rampant even before the fall of the Umayyads. The Abbàsids persecuted the members of the Umayyad house which caused many Arabs to abandon their cause. 'Abd al-Rahmàn, a member of the Umayyad house, was able to escape from the hands of the Abbàsids by fleeing to Spain, where he established the Umayyad dynasty.

Abd al-Rahmàn has given us an account of the difficulties which he had to face on his way to Spain through Egypt and North Africa. He was pursued by the 'Abbàsid governors of these lands, but he benefitted by the dissensions which prevailed among the Arabs in Spain. He exchanged messages in expressing his wishes and offers, until he was able to secure the allegiance of the southern Arab tribes of the Yemenites, capturing Spanish town after town until he entered Cordova and overthrew its Abbàsid governors.[12]

The Abbàsid Caliph Mansùr was aware of the critical situation which 'Abd al-Rahmàn had produced. He did his best to stop him. On the outskirts of Seville the forces of the two monarchs met in a campaign which ended in the defeat of the Abbàsid troops and the death of their leader.[13]

The secession of Spain from the 'Abbàsid empire greatly affected the influence of the 'Abbàsid Caliph, Mansùr, who failed to restore 'Abbàsid authority to this country. He, therefore, attempted to attract Abd al-Rahmàn. He dispatched his messengers to him, and often expressed an appreciation of his capacity, and his will, which enabled a man — lonely and desolate — to establish a realm in distant lands. He called him the hawk of the Quraysh, the great tribe of Mecca to which the Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h.) belonged.[14] Mansùr also frequently spoke of the Umayyad prince as his equal.[15]

When Mansùr's policy failed, he diverted his attention to Pepin the king of the Franks in the hope that he might help him against 'Abd al-

Rahmàn. He dispatched his ambassadors who remained several years at Pepin's court returning in the company of Frankish ambassadors. These ambassadors returned to Pepin overloaded with the valuable presents of the East. However, the negotiations did not produce any results. They only stirred 'Abd al-Rahmàn's fear that the Franks might attack his country.[16] He did not attempt to display his military potential to the Abbàsid Caliph. Although Mansùr did not succeed in putting an end to Abd al-Rahman's power, he succeeded in laying the foundation of the policy which his successors followed after him.

iii) The Foundation of Baghdad:

Saffàh, the first 'Abbàsid caliph, did not take Damascus, the capital of the Umayyads, as his own. He resided in his own castle at Anbàr, the old Persian town on the eastern side of the Euphrates. The castle was renamed Hāshimiyya after his grandfather Hashim (ibn Abd Manaf). When Saffah died in 136/754, his brother Mansur built another castle named Second Hashimiyya or the Hashimiyya of Kùfa, to distinguish it from the first Hāshimiyya.[17] As this town was near Kufa, the centre of Shī'ite activities and the headquarters of rebellious Arab tribes, the Caliph found it no longer suitable as the capital. He then chose the site of Baghdad.

Baghdad was an old town built by the Persians on the western bank of the River Tigris north of the junction of the Saràt canal and the Tigris. It was also a market frequented by traders from Persia and China.[18] Engineers, masons and craftsmen were brought from Syria, Mosul, Basra, Kùfà, and Wàsit to assist in rebuilding the new town.

A plan was described on the ground with lines of cinders. Along the outlines balls of cotton saturated with naphta were set on fire. On these lines were dug the foundations of the double walls, with a deep ditch outside, filled with water, and a third innermost wall around the central

area. The whole thus formed concerntric circles, with four equidistant gateways left in each of the circuits of the walls. In the centre of the town the Caliph Mansùr built his Gold Palace. From the four gates of the inner wall round the central area, four highroads radiated like the spokes of a wheel, each in turn passing through the gateways in the double walls, and finally crossing the ditch.[19] Buildings of similar shape and style were constructed along these highways.

In order to relieve the pressure on Baghdad people of high rank were granted private quarters or fiefs. These quarters, which were named after the man or the group residing in them, soon became thickly populated. The suburbs of Baghdad were divided into four quarters, each having a chief entrusted with the task of establishing a market in his specific quarter. These suburbs soon flourished and the mosques and baths increased in number.[20]

The foundation of the Round City or Baghdad, however, did not circumvent the effects of internal rebellion. Revolts broke out when Mansùr's soldiers fought against him at the Golden Gate of Baghdad. Therefore, he decided to establish Rusàfa, the eastern part of Baghdad, where he settled in a palace, encamped with a section of his army. Thus, each of the two parts of the city became a separate town, and when the inhabitants of either side created any disturbance, he could strike them with the other side.

Rusàfa was originally built as headquarters for the army. It was called the Rùsafa of Baghdad or Eastern Baghdad, because it was situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris. Both Baghdad and Rusàfa extended so far that they became like two small towns each close to the other. In 156/775 Karah was built on the west side of Baghdad, and the markets were transferred to it. As Ibn Rusteh states, the western side of Baghdad, Karah, was double the eastern side, Rusà, so far as its area and buildings were concerned.

Thus in the early 'Abbàsid period, Baghdad became the most important city of the world, the centre of trade, the headquarters of science and art, and the source of wealth and riches. Its magnificent buildings and its beautiful parks became a well known feature of Muslim art.[20]

(C) Mahdī and Hàdī

i) Mahdī's Reforms

Mahdī remained Caliph for the years which were considered a period of transition between the reign of violence and suppression which characterized the rules of the first 'Abbàsid Caliphs and the reign of moderation and leniency which characterized his days and the days of those who followed. Historians state that Mahdī gave back to its owners the property which his father had confiscated, set free the 'Alids, whom his father had imprisoned, pardoned them and bestowed grants upon them. He started his reign with a series of reforms using the treasury which his father had left him and which was adequated in suppressing the Zindīqa, i.e. heretics) and other Muslim dissenters.

Among Mahdī's achievements was the release of many prisoners and the erection of buildings on the road to Mecca. He also built basins and filled them from the wells for the use of caravans. He gave regular gratuities to those imprisoned and those afflicted with leprosy so that they might refrain from begging and prevent the spreading of diseases. He added to the sacred mosque of Madina, but he erased the name of the Umayyad Caliph, Walīd, from its wall and inscribed his name in its place. He also readjusted the mileage system and established the postal service between Makkah, Madina and the Yemen. Later, he also introduced new reforms to these areas. He appointed officials in the various states for the intelligence service to bring news from his governors. This was due to

the sagacity and experience of his vizier, Mu'àwiya ibn Yasàr, whom al-Mahdi entrusted with the administration of his empire.

Justice and prosperity prevailed throughout the 'Abbàsid Empire. Among Mahdī's reforms was the transference of land tax to proportionate tribute in kind (muqàsama). Mahdī also fortified the cities, especially that of Ar-Rusàfa in the eastern side of Baghdad, or the Eastern Baghdad as it was called. During his reign, Baghdad became a centre of international trade, and music, poetry, philosophy and literature became prominent. He also established the tradition of covering the Ka'ba with a new curtain every year. He was inclined towards the Sunna, i.e. traditions established by the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). Therefore, he did away with sanctuaries during the congregation prayer and made the pulpit as small as it had been in the sanctuary of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). Mahdī also used to preside over the court of grievances, the equivalent of the present supreme court. It is related that when this court convened he said: "show the judges in. If there was no advantage to my acting justly among the grieved and giving them their rights except to show respect for these judges, that would be quite sufficient."

ii) Disturbances in Different Parts of the Empire.

Like his father's, Mahdī's reign was characterized by disturbances in various parts in Syria (161/676). Its leader was defeated and captured, but Mahdī pardoned him. The next year a certain Yashkurī rebelled against him in Mesopotamia, his followers increased and he devastated the land. But he was also defeated and killed. Another rebel from the Banù Tamin tribe stirred unrest in Khuràsàn and seized most of the lands of Rabbi'a and Mudar' but he was likewise defeated.

iii) Wars with Byzantium

Wars between the Arabs and the Byzantines had not ceased since the rise of Islam. The Arabs attempted the capture of Constantinople three times; the first during the reign of the third Caliph, 'Uthmàn; the second in the reign of Mu'àwiya I; and the third during the Caliphate of Sulymàn. Civil wars enfeebled the Arabs at the end of the Umayyad period, and the Byzantine emperor Constantine IV seized this opportunity to raid the Muslim lands on the borders of his empire.

With the transfer of the rule to the 'Abbàsids a phase in the wars between the Arabs and the Byzantines passed. These wars became raids, the main object of which was devastation, killing and looting of property. This did not conform to the policy of the Umayyads who had a definite policy of fighting the Byzantines to seize Constantinople. This was due to two main factors: First, the opposition of the Syrians who were loyal to the Umayyads not to the 'Abbàsids. Second, 'Abd al-Rahmàn, the Umayyad, wanted to restore these lands to the Umayyad rule, depending on the loyalty of the interest of the 'Abbàsids in establishing a strong fleet in the Mediterranean to surpass the Umayyad fleet.

The Byzantines began to raid the lands of the 'Abbàsid Empire in the reign of the second Caliph Mansùr. In 137 A.H. (754 A.D.), Constantine IV invaded Syria, captured Malatia and demolished its fortresses. During the next year the Arabs were able to recapture it, repair its fortresses and install a big garrison.[21] Wars broke out from time to time between the 'Abbàsids and the Byzantines, until Constantine IV sued for peace in 155/752 and offered to pay an annual tribute. In Tabarī,[22] we read about summer campaigns in 153,157 and 158 A.H. (752 — 757 A.D.), i.e. in the last years of this caliph's reign. In the next year, Al-Mahdī marched at the head of a large army to invade the Byzantine territories, reaching Angora.[23] Two years later, the 'Abbàsid troops encountered the Byzantine forces in Dēbiq. The 'Abbàsid general

was eventually defeated and many of his soldiers were killed. The Byzantines were so encouraged by this victory that they raided Hadath and then Mar'ash which they set on fire. The Caliph Mahdī marched at the head of 150,000 men, took Aleppo as his headquarters, sent his son Hàrùn (the future Caliph) at the head of a huge army, which included outstanding personalities of the 'Abbàsid Empire such as Yahyà ibn Khàlid the Barmakid, 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Sàlih and 'Isa ibn Mùsa the 'Abbàsid.[24]

Hàrùn invaded the Byzantine territories until he captured the fortress of Samàlo, demolished it, and compelled the Byzantines to pay an indemnity as a ransom for their captives. The Byzantines renounced the terms of peace, and raided the 'Abbàsid territories again. The Caliph al-Mahdī gathered a large army of about 100,000, crossed the River Euphrates, and sent Hàrùn at the head of an army. Hàrùn reached the coasts of the Bosphorus and forced the Byzantine queen, Irene, widow of the emperor Leo IV and regent of her son Constantine VI, to pay Muslims an annual tribute. He also forced her to establish markets, appoint guides on the roads of the Arab's return to their lands, and to release the Muslim captives. As a result of this invasion a truce of five years was concluded between the two parties. The battles had been so bitter that some historians held that the number of Byzantines killed reached 54,000 and the number of captives counted to 5,000.[25]

As a result of these victories achieved by the 'Abbàsid Caliph Mahdī, several kings feared him, and some of them swore allegiance to him. Among those were the kings of Kabul, Tabaristàn, Sindh, India, China, Tukhàristàn, Farhgàna, Ashrùsana, Sijistàn, Tibet and the Turks.[26]

Mahdī did not die a natural death. Mounted on his horse during a hunt, he pursued a gazelle which went into the door of a ruined building. He was knocked down, broke his back, and died immediately.[27]

iv) Hàdī Ascends the Throne.

Hàdī was older than his brother Hàrùn. His father, Mahdī, made them successors one after the other respectively. Then he thought of giving Hàrùn precedence, because he preferred him and joined his mother Khayzuràn in loving him. However, the Caliph Mahdī died before this change was affected. Hàrùn was wise enough to hasten in support of his brother when he heard of his father's death.

Hàdī inherited his father's hatred for the heretics (Zanàdiqa) and endeavored to suppress them. He carried out his father's desire to save the country from their evils. He thus wasted no energy in striking against the heretics and the dissenters (Khawàrij) who revolted in Mesopotamia, and he killed those whom he captured.

The hatred of Hàdī for the Umayyads was no less than his hatred for the heretics and the dissenters. He never felt satisfied because he believed that the members of his house had not taken sufficient revenge on the Umayyads.

Hàdī imitated Mansur in what he had done with 'Isa Ibn Mùsa, and decided to exclude his brother Hàrùn from succession to the throne. He wanted to force him to relinquish his title to Hàdī's son, Ja'far, as his successor. His court encouraged him to do so; but Yahyà Ibn Khalid the Barmakid advised him to abandon this idea, because of the young age of his son and out of respect for the oath which he had taken when his father had named the successors. Thus he should avoid the deposition of his brother from the Caliphate. He also advised him to postpone this matter until his son grew older and then to ask his brother, Hàrùn, to abandon his rights to the succession.[28] But Hàdī did not listen to Yahyà's advice and imprisoned him.

Hàrùn, however, was inclined to respond to his brother's demand after he had been persecuted by him, and his courtiers had mistreated him. Yahyà the Barmakid advised him to take his brother's permission to go hunting. His brother consented and Hàrùn kept delaying his return until he received the news of his brother's death and of his succession to the throne. Some historians maintain that the decision of Hàdī to exclude his brother, Hàrùn, from succeeding to the Caliphate drove his mother Khayzuràn to plan his death. However, this matter is doubtful. It is unlikely that such a great hostility existed between Hàdī and his mother. Some historians go so far as to say that his mother had used some of her slave girls to kill him. They hold that his mother would have the final word during the reign of her husband Mahdī, so that people would go to her for settling their problems. When Hàdī succeeded to the Caliphate, he did not approve of that and prohibited her from exercising this authority, which explains her antagonism toward her son.[29]

The caliphate of Hàdī did not last long. He died in Baghdad in 170 A.H. after having remained in the Caliphate for one year, one month and twenty days. Fakhri[30] 'says: "The night he died was such a night in which one caliph died, another sat on the throne, and yet another was born. For the Caliph who died was Hàdī, the one who became Caliph was Harun, and the one who was born was Ma'mùn."

3. The Golden Age of the Early 'Abbàsid Period:

(A) Hàrùn al-Rashīd:

Harun is considered the most famous of the 'Abbàsid caliphs. In his reign Baghdad reached the climax of its importance: it became the centre of trade and the goal of men of letters. The name of Harun became famous in Europe for the political relations and the bonds of friendship which existed between him and Charlemagne, the king of the Franks. The Arabian Nights, which was translated into many western

languages increased his fame in western countries. These tales are now considered the heritage of every western child. Though he was troubled by internal revolts especially in Mosel and Irriqiyya. (Tunisia), Harun was among the best caliphs: eloquent, learned and generous. He customarily set out on pilgrimage every alternate year, sending a military expedition in the other. In his prayers he would prostrate a hundred times each day, and he made pilgrimage on foot, which no other Caliph had done before. If he set out on pilgrimage, 100,000 jurists of the shariah law and their sons went along with him. In his deeds he used to imitate Abù Ja'far al-Mansùr, and he never refused charity to the needy. He loved poetry and poets, was fond of men of letters and jurisprudents and disliked theological debates.[31]

During Harun's reign Baghdad reached a high state of civilization and prosperity, where great palaces were built, sources of revenue increased, and articles of trade made available from the farthest countries. Suyùtî[32] states that Harun wanted to join the Mediterranean and the Red Sea beyond Pelusium (Al-Farmà), the gate of Egypt. Yahyà the Barmakid did not approve of this idea, saying to him:

> "The Greeks would kidnap the people from the sacred mosque and would be able to force their way to the Hijàz." Harun, therefore, abandoned the idea.

i) The Barmakids:

Barmak, the father of the Barmakid family, was the priest of the House of Fire at Balkh. He was the guardian of this house, as Qusayy, the grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad, and his sons were the guardians of the Ka'ba at Mecca before Islam. Barmak and his family adopted the Magian religion which had prevailed in ancient Persia. When Islam appeared, some of them embraced it. Khàlid Ibn Barmak became a vizier during the reigns of Saffàh and Mansùr.

Harun took Yahyà, Khalid's son, as his scribe to consult him in his affairs as the caliph did with minister. When Harun became caliph, he made Yahyà his minister. He and his sons were, as the author Fakhrī[33] says : "The blaze on the forehead of its time, the crown of the parting of the age. Proverbs were made from their generosity, caravans set off towards them and hopes depended an them. The world gave them generously of its utmost, and granted them its good fortune to the full. The wares of letters had a brisk sale, and the rank of those who deserved respect and esteem was high. The world in their time was prosperous and the pomp of the realm was evident. They were the shelter of the heartbroken and the refuge of the exited." About them says Abù Nuwàs: "Farewell to this world if you were missing, O sons of Barmak, those of you who go away at morning or evening."

This was why Hàrùn Rashīd bestowed this ministry on the faithful scribe. When he ascended the throne, he entrusted him with the conduct of the affairs of the state, and sought the support of his four sons : Ja'far, Fadl, Muhammad and Mùsa. The author Fakhri[34] says: "Yahyà advanced the interests of the state, he filled the gaps, corrected the defects, collected the revenue, populated the farther provinces, and displayed the glory of the caliphate." He was an accomplished scribe, sagacious, intelligent, a man of letters, upright, generous, a sound administrator and a clever organiser.

Fadl, the eldest son of Yahyà, was among the best of the people of his time; he was the right hand of his father, and represented him in most of the important affairs. He had been nurtured by the mother of Hàrùn.

When Amīn was born, his father Hàrùn assigned to Fadl the task of raising him. In 176 A.H. he dispatched him to fight the 'Alid Yahyà who had revolted in the Daylam province south of the Caspian Sea. Two

years later, Yahyà was appointed governor of Khuràsàn where he suppressed the revolt which rose there. He treated its inhabitants leniently and returned to Baghdad after one year.

The influence of the Barmakids greatly increased in the reign of Harun. However, they met their fate at the hands of their supporter and benefactor. Harun inflicted severe punishment upon them for several reasons, the most important of which was their tendency towards the 'Alids. It may be well to investigate in brief outline the factors which led to the overthrow of the Barmakids, which is considered to be among the most important incidents that occurred not only in the reign of Rashīd but also in the early 'Abbàsid period in general.

Arab historians and biographers differ about reasons which caused Harun to afflict this calamity on the Barmakids, even though he had been brought up by Yahyà ibn Khalid the Barmacid, whom he used to call father! Some assert that Harun was enraged because of the relations between Ja'far ibn Yahyà and his sister, al-'Abbàsa, while others maintain that his antagonism was due to the release of the 'Alīd Yahyà Ibn 'Abd Allàh by Ja'far the Barmakid after having received the Caliph's orders to put him in jail. Another school of thought holds that the Barmakids had exercised absolute authority in conducting affairs of the state and that their collection of riches attracted the people to them. This may have provoked Harun's anger and consequent desire to punish them.

Furthermore, the Barmakids displayed much familiarity that this monarch found unsupportable. They gave their rivals, such as Fadl ibn Al-Rabī' who represented the Arab party grounds to instigate the Caliph against them. The author Fakhri has supplied us with an account which may serve as historic evidence in explaining the collapse of the Barmakids. Harun's Christian physician, Bakhtīshù' said : "One day I went to Harun when he was sitting in his castle, al-Khuld (The Eternity), in the City of Peace (Baghdad). The Barmakids lived on the other bank

of the river Tigiris. Harun looked out and saw the throng of horses and the crowds of people at the gate of Yakyà ibn Khàlid. So he said: 'May God reward Yahyà well. He occupies himself with the affairs of the state and frees me from trouble and gives me ample time for pleasure.' Then, I went to him after a while when he had started to change his good feelings towards them. He looked out and saw the horses as he had seen them before, and said: 'Yahyà has achieved complete control of the affairs of state beyond me; the caliphate actually belongs to him, and I have got nothing off it except the name." 'Bakhtīshà', then said "Therefore, I perceived that he would overthrow them, and so he did immediately after this'."[35]

In a word, the collapse of the Barmakid family was due to successive events which had urged Harun not simply to eliminate their influence but also to overthrow them and wipe out every Barmakid trace. Ja'far, the Barmacid, was killed, and the other members of his family followed him later. And with him disappeared every trace of this family which had great influence on the advancement of Muslim civilization, in the sciences and letters, agriculture and trade.[36]

ii) Wars with Byzantium

Harun took a keen interest in establishing peace in the 'Abbàsid lands bordering the Byzantine empire. In 181 A.H. (797 A.D.) he marched to Asia Minor where he achieved many victories over the Byzantines. Then he continued his conquests until he reached Constantinople. As a result of these victories, the empress Irene hastened to sue for an armistice in return for a capitation tax. However, Nicephorus, who ascended the throne after Irene, sent Harun a letter revoking this armistice and renouncing the capitation tax which had been paid by Irene. When Harun read that letter, he became so enraged that his companions dispersed out of fear. Then he ordered an inkstand to be brought, and wrote the reply to the emperor's letter in severe terms. He

renewed fight, and continued his raids. He seized the city of Heraclea while the emperor was engaged in suppressing an internal revolt. The pride and boasting of the emperor was ended by a treaty of peace in which he was forced to pay the capitation tax anew.[37] The Arab poets made these events subjects of their poems in praise of Harun.

However the Byzantines again renounced the armistice. They pushed their way into 'Abbàsid territories in the next year, attacking the Muslims in Asia Minor, particularly in Mar'ash and Tarsus. The fact that Harun was occupied with crushing internal revolts in his country helped the Byzantines to achieve victory. Harun marched once again to the Byzantine territories, attacked their forces, seized Heraclea and Tiyana and other important towns, and imposed a capitation tax.[38] The Muslim historian, Tabarī,[39] adds that the emperor Nicephorus made a condition that Harun was not to demolish certain fortresses such as Sinàn, and that Harun made another condition that the emperor would not repair Heraclea and that he would also pay the Muslims 300,000 dīnàrs.

The wars which Harun waged against the Byzantines were not confined to Asia Minor but they extended to the Mediterranean. In 190 A.H. (806 A.D.) the 'Abbàsids invaded the island of Cyprus and took 16,000 of its inhabitants as captives.

Unfriendly relations continued between the 'Abbàsids in the East and the Umayyads in Spain. Charles Martel the king of the Franks made use of the dissensions between the two houses. He approached the 'Abbàsid Caliph, Mahdī in order to gain more influence in his country, and thus threaten his rival the Byzantine emperor. Charlemagne reaped the fruits of this policy by winning the friendship of Harun. He sent him a deputy of two Christians and a Jew for facilitating the pilgrimage of the Christians to Jerusalem and for increasing trade between the two countries, thus hoping to acquire the sciences of the East. Harun was

inclined to make an agreement with Charlemagne against the emperor of Constantinople and the Umayyad prince in Spain.

However, these negotiations were fruitless, save that they resulted in sending the keys of the Church of Jerusalm to Charlemagne and the exchange of presents between the two monarchs. Charlemagne became the protector of the Christians who set out on pilgrimages in these lands. Although Charlemagne took no keen interest in this matter, it became important later because it gave the king of the Franks the right to protect the sacred places in Palestine.

Among the presents sent from Harun to Chalemagne which aroused the amazement of the Franks were the elephants which reached Aix-la-Chapelle, the capital of Chalemagne's empire, and the striking water clock which they imagined was a magic machine.

Harun died in 193/809. His caliphate had lasted twenty-three years and six months; he died at the age of forty-four and four months.

(B) Amin-Ma'mùn

Before his death Rashīd proclaimed his son Amin as heir apparent and his other sons Ma'mùn and Mu'taman, as his successors. He wrote a document to this effect, bearing the signatures of the members of his house, the doctors of the canon law and other men of high rank, and he sent a copy of it to be hung up in the Ka'ba in Mecca. Al-Fadl Ibn Al-Rabī', who was of Arab origin, was confirmed in his office as vizier by the new caliph. He induced him to exclude his brother, Ma'mùn, from the succession and proclaim his son Mùsa as his successor. Fadl Ibn Sahl, who represented the Persian element, advised Ma'mùn to reject his brother's proposal.[40] Conflict arose between Amin and his brother Ma'mùn, which was, as a matter of fact, a party struggle between the 'Abbàsids and the 'Alīds on one hand, and the Persians and the Arabs on

the other. This conflict was due to the appointment by Harun of his son, Amīn, as his first crown prince.

Amīn's attitude toward his brother stirred the wrath of the people of Khuràsàn and of other Muslim provinces, particularly the inhabitants of Hijàz who revolted against him; the fire of rebellion which led to his death was kindled and brought his caliphate to an end. It was due to the alertness and effficiency of Ma'mun and the negligence and carelessness of Amīn that Baghdad was captured by Ma'mùn's troops in 198 A.H. Amīn was killed and his head sent to his brother Ma'mùn in Khuràsàn.

However, if we examine this revolt more closely, we will find that these catastrophies were due to Harun's policy,[41] First; because he appointed Amin as his crown prince before Ma'mùn who was older. Secondly, he gave Ma'mùn a great advantage in the lands which he granted him in fief, so that he could resist his brother and overcome him. Amin was to rule Iraq and Syria, Ma'mùn, Persia, and Mu'taman, north Africa and Egypt. Thirdly, Amin was inclined to favour his son and exclude his brother, thus breaking his promise, annulling his father's document, and violating the sanctity of the sacred house in Mecca which stirred the Muslims against him.

Ma'mùm was proclaimed caliph when he was in Rayy in 198/813. But he remained in Khuràsàn until 204 A.H. (819 A.D.). The author Fakhri[42] describes Ma'mùn in these words : "Know that al-Ma'mùn was among the greatest caliphs and the wisest of men. He set many new systems in his kingdom; among them the investigation of the science of philosophy and study of literature. He ordered these works to be translated into Arabic and published them. He mastered Euclid and studied the sciences of the ancients, discussed medicine and patronised the men of wisdom who became close to him. Among his innovations was the taxation of the people of the fertile soil of Iraq (Sawàd) on the basis of taking one-fifth of their crop in kind after it had been customary to take

one half. Moreover he compelled the people to profess the (Mutazillite belief of) creation of the Qur'an."

In the reign of Amīn no wars between the 'Abbàsid and the Byzantine empires occurred because he was occupied with the rebellion which had developed between his brother Ma'mùn and himself. When Ma'mùn ascended the throne of the caliphate conflict between these two empires started again. Ma'mùn encouraged Thomas the Slav in his revolt against the emperor Theophilis in Asia Minor, provided him with money and men, and endeavoured to have him crowned by the Patriarch at Antioch. Ma'mùn's manoeuvre, however, was soon discovered and he was, therefore, unable to achieve his end. The Byzantine emperor adopted the same policy towards the 'Abbàsid caliph. He made the Byzantine territories the abode of the Khurramiyya, the followers of the Persian Bàbak al-Khurramī, who revolted against Al-Ma'mùn and declared his independence of the 'Abbàsid empire for twenty-two years (201-223 A.H., 816-838 A.D.) during which time he spread the doctrines of his sect. However, the Byzantine emperor eventually became uninterested and sued for peace. He sent a letter which Ma'mùn thought insulted his dignity, and rejected the offer to continued peace with the Byzantine emperor.[43] In the last year of his reign, Ma'mùn marched at the head of an army to fight his third and last campaign against the Byzantines,[44] but he succummed to a fever while he was north of the city of Tarsus. He died at the age of forty-eight, after having named his brother, Abù Ishàq, as his successor. Thus he did well towards his family and himself.

6. End of the Early 'Abbàsid Period:

(A) Mu'tasim:

Al-Mu'tasim was named caliph the day his brother Ma'mùn died (Rajab 18, 218/833-842). At the beginning, the soldiers refused to swear allegiance to him and wanted to declare 'Abbàs, son of al-Ma'mùn,

caliph. The latter hastened to swear allegiance to his father's will and the army followed his example.[45]

The author Fakhri[46] describes Mu'tasim in these words: "Mu'tasim was sound-minded and strongly built. He could carry a thousand pounds and walk with them for some paces. He was characterized by courage, and was called the octagon for eleven reasons: he was the eighth of the sons of 'Abbàs, the eight ('Abbàsid) Caliph; his Caliphate lasted eight years and eight mouths; he died at the age of forty-eight, he was born in Sha'bàn which is the eighth month of the Muslim Calendar. He had eight sons and eighth daughters; he set out on eight military expeditions and left eight million dirhams."

Mu'tasim as we have seen, carried out the will of his brother, Ma'mùn, in making the people declare that the Qur'an was created. His policy towards the 'Alids was no less strict than that of the 'Abbàsid Caliphs before him except Ma'mùn.[47] His policy of securing the aid of the Turks and bestowing grants on them alone aroused the jealousy and envy of the Arabs towards the Turks. Ujaif, the Arab leader who had achieved a brilliant victory in fighting the Gypsies (Zutt), revolted against the Turkish generals who had mistreated the Arabs.[48] He decided to dispose of Mu'tasim and tempted 'Abbàs to rebel against his uncle and claim the throne. The Arabs joined the conspiracy and agreed to kill Mu'tasim, Al-Afshīn and Ashnàs if the distribution of spoils which the Muslims had seized from the Byzantines in the famous battle of Amorian was concluded. The news of this conspiracy reached Al-Mu'tasim through one of the conspirators. Al-Mu-tasim withheld water from 'Abbàs. Later, Ujaif,[49] died.

Mu'tasim's dependence on the Turks had a bad effect on the Arabs. They revolted in Syria under the leadership of Abù Harb the Veiled (Al-Mubarqa') who started a revolt in Palestine shortly before the death of Mu'tasim.[50]

Also among the difficulties with which Mu'tasim was confronted was the revolt of the Zutt who had created disturbance since the reign of Ma'mùn. According to Ibn Khaldun, they were of a mixed race which blockaded the highway of Basra and devastated a wide area of land. They are known as Gypsies and trace their descent to the Indians in Asia, settled on the coast of the Persian Gulf. They seized the opportunity of the conflict between Amīn and Al-Ma'mùn to capture the Basra road.

When Ma'mùn returned to Baghdad, he despatched one of his generals to suppress them (205 A.H.). In the next year he appointed Dàwùd (ibn Masjùr) governor of Basra and the provinces of the Tigris, Yamàma and Bahren and entrusted to him the task of fighting them. Yet these wars were of no avail; the Gypsies continued their wars against the 'Abbàsids until the reign of Mu'tasim, when they seized the way to Basra, imposed exorbitant taxes on the ships, and prevented food and provisions from reaching Baghdad. This Caliph dispatched his Arab general, 'Ujaif to fight against them. He encamped near the city of Wàsit, blockaded the rivers, surrounded them from all sides, fought them for nine months, and eventually compelled them to sue for security. They numbered 27,000, including men, women and children. The Arab general carried the Gypsies in ships and entered Baghdad with them on Muharram 10, 220/835, where they were interviewed by the Caliph and the men of high rank in his state. He ordered them to be exiled to Asia Minor where they remained until they were captured by the Byzantines in 241/855. Hence, they found their way to Europe where they were known as Gypsies, and usually remained outside the cities.[51]

In the reign of Mu'tasim, relations between the 'Abbàsid and the Byzantine empire became worse. Mu'tasim, however, was far-sighted; he directed his attention to the Bàbak's revolt first. The Byzantine emperor seized this opportunity, attacked the city of Zapetra which he set on fire, taking its Muslims as captives. Emperor Theophilus' aim was to rescue Bàbak. Therefore, he captured the Muslim women and made an

example of those who fell in his hands. When this news reached the Caliph, he was enraged. While he was sitting on his throne, he heard that a Hàshimite woman cried while a captive of the Byzantines: "Oh Mu'tasim!". He at once rose and shouted in his place: "War, war is declared." He then mounted his horse,[52] marched at the head of a huge army, defeated the Byantines and captured Angora. Next he intended to devastate Amorian where the Emperor Theophilus had been raised. He encamped west of the River Tigris, surrounded by his soldiers under the leadership of a select party of his famous Turkish generals.

At the head of this army, Mu'tasim proceeded to Asia Minor until he reached Amorian, which he besieged killing its inhabitants. It is said that the number of those who were killed was 30,000. He left the city in flames for four days. Its nobility and men of high rank paid heavy ransoms. When Mu'tasim returned to Sàmarrà, which had been his capital since 221/836, the Muslims celebrated his glorious victory and the famous poet Abù Tammàm composed a poem in which he praised the caliph.[53]

For a long period during the reign of the 'Abbàsid Caliph Mu'tasim (218-227/833-842), a treaty with Nubia was renewed, and the King of Nubia was received in the 'Abbàsid capital with great magnificence and dismissed with costly presents. The relations between the two countries were restricted and peaceful, except for occasional raids and the withholding of the "baqt" tribute from time to time. The Muslim interest in the country south of Aswan had been confined until then to the export of slaves and later the exploitation of many mines in the Beja (or Bajà) country, on the Eastern bank of the Nile, scattered between the Nubian Nile and the Red Sea in the lands stretching almost between Aswan and Dongola.

(B) Wàthiq:

Wàthiq succeeded his father Mu'tasim in 227/842. The new Caliph imitated his father's policy in depending on the Turks whose number increased and who occupied the important posts in the state. He entrusted to Ashinàs the conduct of the state affairs and crowned him with a crown set with jewels.[54] Wàthiq also followed his father's policy in supporting the Mu'tazilla and in strictly imposing his religious view which stirred the people of Baghdad to conspire against him.

The governors of the provinces enjoyed great influence in the reign of Wàthiq. 'Abd Allàh Ibn Husayn Ibn Tàhir directed the affairs of Khuràsàn, Tabaristàn and Kirmàn. He entrusted to Ashinàs, the Truk, the affairs of Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and North Africa. Ashinàs appointed deputy governors to conduct the affairs of these provinces, while he himself remained in Sàmarrà, then the capital of the caliphate.

Weakness and corruption characterized the system of government in the reign of Wàthiq. One night he asked one of his companions to narrate the episode which had led to the collapse of the Barmakids at the hand of his grandfather, Hàrùn al-Rashid. When he heard the story and knew how Harun had siezed their property he said: "By God! My grandfather was right, for it is only the weak and the incapable that do not overrule and exercise absolute power." A week had hardly passed before he attacked his scribes and obtained from each of them a sum of money ranging between 14,000 and 1,000,000 dīnàrs. This shows the extent of corruption and bribery which prevailed among the important men of this period[55].

Wàthiq ruled the 'Abbàsid empire for less than six years. Unlike his predecessors, he did not declare any of his sons as his crown prince. In his last illness he was asked to name his eldest son as his successor, but he did not approve and said: "I do not bear the burden of your affairs

alive and dead." He died in 232/847, and with his death, the golden age of the 'Abbàsid Empire came to an end, perhaps due to the dominating influence of the foreign Turks whose control was repudiated by the Arab peoples.

NOTES

1. Tabari, series II, p. 1933.

2. *Ahsan al-Taqāsim* (ed. de Uoeje), pp. 293 - 294.

3. The cultivated land which forms the region of Kùfa.

4. The partisans who adhere to the cause of the Caliph 'Uthman who had been mudered in 35 A. H.

5. Deriwed from Harūrà', a village lying in the outskirts of Kùfa, in which the Khawarij settled after they had deserted the fourth caliph 'Ali. Hence they are called Harùriyya or Khawàrij. Yàqùt, Buldàn, s. v.

6. The Abbàsids are said to have adopted the black colour as their emblem, mourning the death of their leader Ibràhim at the hand of Marwan II, the last Umayyad Caliph. See Van Vloten, *La Domination Arabe, Le Chi'itisme et Les Croyances Messianiques sous le Chilafat des Umayades*, translated into Arabic by me, pp. 124 - 126.

7. For this name, see Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 253, n.1, and my *Fatimids in Egypt* (Cairo, 1932), p. 42, n.2, and my *Tàrikh al-Islam*, Vol.II, (5th ed.) p. 20, n.1.

8. Goldziher, *Le Dogme et la Loi de l'Islam* (French translation. Paris, 1920), p. 140.

9. See my *al-Nuzum al-Islāmiyya* (Islamic Institutions) (3rd ed. Cairo, 1962), pp. 50 - 51.

10. Mas'ùdi, *Murùj*, vol.II, pp. 215-216.

11. *Al-Ahkam al-Sultàniyya*, pp. 141-142.

12. Maqqari, *Nafh al-Tib*, vol. I, pp. 155 - 156.

13. Ibn al-Athir, Vol. V, p. 232.

14. *Al-'Iqd al-Farid*, Vol.III, pp. 201-202.

15. Maqqari, Vol. I, p. 157.

16. Muir, *The Caliphate*, pp. 400-401.

17. Ya'qùbi, *Kitab al-Buldàn*, p. 37. Tabari, Vol. IX, p. 174. Le Strange, *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 1-14.

18. Tabari, Vol. IX, p. 240.

19. *Baghdad*, Vol. I, p. 76.

20. Ya'qùbi, *Buldàn*, pp. 240-249.

21. Hassan, I. Hassan, *Islam*, p. 297.

22. Ibn al-Athir, Vol. IV, p. 22.

23. Vol. V; p. 286.

24. Tabari, Vol. IX, p. 288.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 326, 432. In al-Athir, Vol. VI, p. 22.

26. Finlay, pp. 104-107. The Muslim historian, Tabari (Vol. IX, p. 347), has supplied us with the text of the terms of peace concluded between the 'Abbàsids and the Byzantines.

27. Ya'qùbi, *History*, Vol. II, p. 429.

28. Fakhri, p. 163.

29. Fakhri, p. 180.

30. Tabari, Vol. x, p. 33; Mas'udi, Vol. II, p. 261.

31. *Al-Ankham al-Sultàniyya*, p. 174.

32. Fakhri, p. 175.

33. *Tàrikh al-Khulafà*, p. 189.

34. Ibn Tabàtabà, p. 179 et. seq.

35. *Ibid.* p. 179.

36. Ibn Tabàtabà, p. 190.

37. See my *Tàrikh al-Islam*, Vol. II, pp. 47-53.

38. Tabari, Vol. X, pp. 92-93.

39. Muir, *The Caliphate*, pp. 478.

40. Vol. X, p. 99.

41. Mas'ùdi, *Murùj*, Vol.II, p. 304.

42. Tabari, Vol. X, pp. 174, 184, 190-208.

43. *Al-Ahkam al-Sultàniyya*, pp. 197-198.

44. Both messages are recorded by Tabari, Vol. X, pp. 283-284.

45. Muir, *The Caliphate*, p. 506.

46. Tabri, Vol. X, p. 304.

47. *Al-Adàb al-Sultàniyya*, pp. 209-210.

48. Mas'ùdi, *Muraj*, Vol. II, pp. 348-349.

49. Tabri, Vol. X, p. 356; Muir, *The Caliphate*, p. 514.

50. Tabari, Vol. X, p. 344.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 6.

52. Tabari, Vol. X, p. 356. Muir, *The Caliphate*, p. 514.

53. Ibn al-Athir, Vol. VI, p. 176.

54. Suyùti, *Tarikh ol-Khulafà'*, p. 223.

55. Tabari, Vol. XI, pp. 10-12.